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Policy-to-practice context for inclusive education in England, with specific reference to moderate learning difficulties (MLD)

by

Susan Louise Madigan

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ABBREVIATIONS

AEN	Additional Educational Needs
AO	Advisory Officers
AWPU	Age-Weighted Pupil Unit
BLD	Band of Learning Difficulty
CAF	Common Assessment Framework
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CSIE	Centre for Studies of Inclusive Education
DES	Department of Education and Science
DfCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DfE	Department for Education
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
EARLI	European Association for Research on Learning and Instruction
EBD	Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties
ECM	Every Child Matters
EP	Educational Psychologist
ERA	Education Reform Act
HC	House of Commons
HIAS	Head of Inclusion Advisory Service
HL	House of Lords
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspectorate
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IE	Inclusive Education
IEP	Individual Education Plan
ISPA	International School Psychology Association
KS	Key Stage
LA	Local Authority
LEA	Local Education Authority

Continued

LMS	Local Management of Schools
MLD	Moderate Learning Difficulties
MoE	Ministry of Education
MP	Member of Parliament
Nasen	National Association of SEN
NC	National Curriculum
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PE	Physical Education
PEP	Principal Educational Psychologist
PLASC	Pupil Level Annual School Census
PSEO	Principal Special Education Officer
PSHE	Personal Social and Health Education
SA	School Action
SAP	School Action Plus
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
SLD	Severe Learning Difficulties
Statements	Statements of SEN
TA	Teaching Assistant
TAC	Team around the Child
TC	Target Child
UK	United Kingdom
UNCF	United Nation Children's Fund
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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ABSTRACT

The research aim was to investigate the current policy-to-practice context for inclusive education in England for children with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD). A case study of one London Borough focused on mainstream and special education provision.

Research questions required an examination of the policy-to-practice context of MLD and Bowe, Ball and Gold (1992) policy trajectory model was utilised to structure the research design and frame the data gathering. This facilitated an examination of contexts of policy influence, policy text production and practice, where text is reinterpreted. Successive stages of data gathering informed those that followed, from scrutiny of Hansard to access policy influences, through analysis of changing SEN legislation, to interviews with stakeholders and observations of target children with MLD.

Hansard texts revealed lack of clarity in SEN definitions, the statementing process, parental choice and funding that led to inconsistencies in interpretation of policy and inequalities in inclusive practice at local level. Analysis suggested that efforts to create clarity and direction in local policy were thwarted by continuing difficulties to define MLD and inclusive education. Interviews indicated that educational provision for MLD children was adversely affected as this inhibited identification, consistent and effective interventions and thereby created possible inequities in funding allocation. Whilst robust funding formulae were in place, lack of clear group definition introduced a level of interpretation into the process, rendering equity in funding less likely. Interviews and observation indicated tensions and dilemmas were evident for practitioners in balancing the needs of all pupils, allocating resources and meeting individual needs. The experience of individual pupils were affected by deployment of staff, individualisation of the curriculum and social inclusion with peers, in both mainstream and special settings.

Challenges facing all those involved in taking national policy, interpreting it and enacting it locally are identified and implications considered.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This research investigated the current policy-to-practice context for inclusive education (IE) in England for children with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD). A case study of one London Borough focused upon mainstream and special education provision for children with MLD, with particular attention given to pupils' access to the curriculum and social inclusion.

This chapter will focus on the background to the study, and the policy-to-practice model employed as an analytical framework for the investigation. Consideration will then be given to the changing concepts surrounding the models of disability that have been prominent during the twentieth century, and associated special educational needs (SEN) terminology. An overview of international and national influences will explain the context within which practice occurs at Local Authority (LA) and school levels, and the focus of emerging practice. This overview of changing concepts, policies and practice, will lead to the research questions.

When national policy is discussed, references are made to Hansard debate texts. The referencing of these texts is explained in the introduction to Chapter 4.

1.1 Background to the research

The LA within which this research was conducted was concerned to ensure effective and cost-effective education provision for pupils with MLD, and required practice to be evidence based. To this end, a scoping study was commissioned (Aubrey, Aubrey and Sutton, 2005). It concluded that in practice the goal of educational inclusion proved difficult to achieve, despite early intervention, personalised learning, developing teacher skills and focusing on children's progress, more SEN children educated in mainstream schools, supported by special schools designated as centres of excellence and close partnerships between education, health, social services and the voluntary sector. The study highlighted the importance of: considering effectiveness and equity in terms of academic, social, affective and life-chance outcomes; ensuring children in different settings are equally well provided for and that provision reaches those with greatest need. The significance of these findings for LA practice led to the commissioning of this larger, mainly qualitative study, together with a separately commissioned, quantitative study, discussed below.

Multilevel modelling analysis of National Curriculum (NC) standard assessment data were conducted for the LA, focusing on Key Stages (KS) 1, 2 and 3 for SEN pupils who participated in the English national assessments in 2003, 2004 and 2005 (Aubrey, Godfrey, Madigan and Cook, 2008). The analysis showed a disparity in attainment between pupils at different stages of SEN registration and normally developing pupils with similar demographic characteristics.

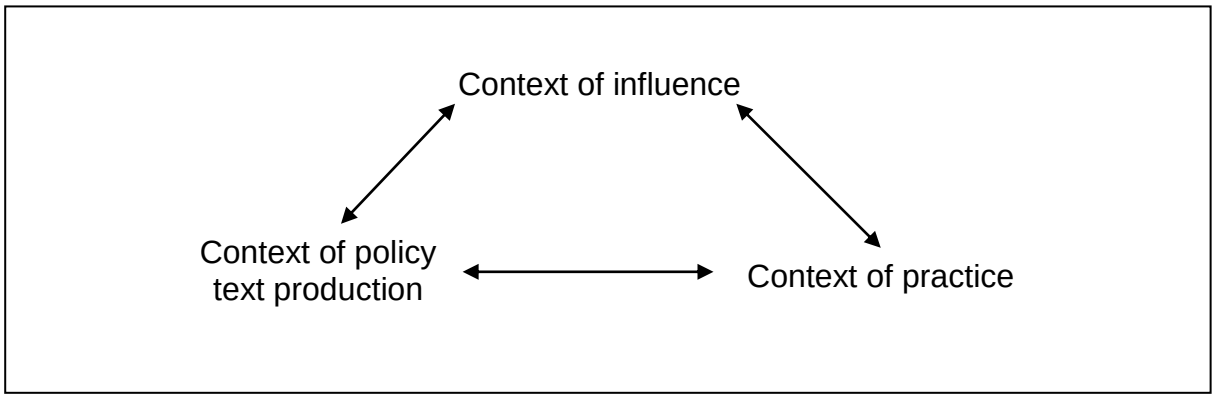
Those SEN children at School Action (SA) level, as a group, scored below their normally developing peers and those children at School Action Plus (SAP) level as a group scoring below those at SA level. In turn, those children with a statement in mainstream settings scored still lower, with those statemented and in special schools scoring the lowest of all. Very little disturbed the pattern of scores across the three KSs and across the three years for which data were analysed.

The LA commissioned this research to investigate the operation of IE on a larger scale. The researcher was fortunate to be examining research opportunities at the time that the LA decided to proceed, and was therefore available to take advantage of this study for the purposes of undertaking a PhD.

1.2 The framework for the research

To produce a focused study that incorporated all aspects of SEN, the investigation was conducted within the framework of the continuous policy process developed by Bowe, Ball and Gold (1992). This model identifies three contexts within which policy is developed, produced as text and enacted, as shown in Figure 1.1. The relationships that exist between these three contexts create a continuous process.

Figure 1.1: ‘Contexts of policy making’ (Bowe *et al*, 1992: 20)



Public policy is considered to be initiated within the ‘context of influence’. It is here that concepts are formed and taken into the public arena for debate (Bowe *et al*, 1992). At a national level, Members of Parliament (MPs) debate SEN policy in the Houses of Parliament, their views informed by, for example, personal experience, Party politics, lobby groups, associations and charities.

Agreed policy is represented in text created within the ‘context of policy text production’. Text can take the form of, for example, legislation, official guidance, and explanatory text. It may be necessarily ambiguous to be applicable in all contexts, however, such ambiguity leaves it prey to (re)interpretation and misuse during the implementation stage; the ‘context of practice’ (Bowe *et al*, 1992).

Ball (Mainardes and Marcondes, 2009) referred to the complexity of the process of changing text into action. Policy is subject to interpretation by people with different knowledge and experiences, resulting in individuals interpreting and enacting it differently. It is, therefore, impossible for

governments to control the ways in which policies are eventually put into practice, or to predict whether they will achieve the intended outcome (Bowe *et al*, 1992).

Ball (Mainardes and Marcondes, 2009) suggested that the policy process is additionally complicated by each context having an element of the others within it, for example, the context of practice contains within it an element of the contexts of influence and policy text production. The analysis of the data will demonstrate this to be the case in the context of SEN provision.

1.3 Changing concepts

The *Education Act* (Ministry of Education [MoE], 1944) formalised aspects of special education, epitomising the medical model of disability that was prominent in the United Kingdom (UK) until the early 1970s. Children with severe learning difficulties (SLD) received a segregated education within the jurisdiction of the Department of Health, and children with less severe special needs were placed in special schools or special units in ordinary schools. The *Education Act* (MoE, 1944) required children to be categorised according to their disability, and in 1959 the Handicapped Pupils and Special Schools Regulations, listed ten categories of pupils requiring 'special educational treatment', including: blind, deaf, physically handicapped and educationally sub-normal (Department of Education and Science [DES], 1978: 380). This terminology reflected a medical diagnosis of a child's difficulty, a medical solution in terms of 'treatment', and the inference that the difficulty lay solely

within the child. It also perpetuated a system of education based upon segregation.

The situation changed for children with SLD with the implementation of the *Education (Handicapped Children) Act* (DES, 1970), which placed the education of all children within the remit of the Local Education Authority (LEA) (Frederickson and Cline, 2002) and under the control of the DES. However, segregated provision and the predominance of the medical model continued.
In the early 1970's politicians' recognised changing public opinion regarding the segregation of children in society. In 1973, Education Minister Margaret Thatcher appointed the Warnock Committee to review the education of handicapped children and young people.

The recommendations articulated in the Warnock Report (DES, 1978) were based upon a change in the way of conceptualising SEN. A medical diagnosis placed a child in a particular category, however their ability to learn may or may not have been influenced by their diagnosed medical condition. This created confusion between the form the disability took and the actual SEN (DES, 1978, para. 3.23). The Committee recommended that special provision should be based upon a detailed description of a child's difficulties, their SEN, as opposed to a category of handicap. This led to the concept of a spectrum of needs, necessitating a continuum of provision (DES,1978).

It was recognised that descriptive terms would be required for groups of children needing special provision and so within this SEN group, the term

'children with learning difficulties' was suggested, which, it was said, could present as mild, moderate, severe or specific difficulties (DES, 1978). This new conceptualisation of SEN and the requirement of the *Education Act* (DES, 1981) that children with disabilities were to be educated in mainstream provision became strongly contested areas of debate.

Thinking in terms of SEN as opposed to handicap, had a major impact upon the numbers of children falling within the remit of special education. Warnock estimated that up to one in five children would need some special education provision at some point during their school life. In 1977 the largest group of children in special schools, and sixty four per cent of children categorised as handicapped in ordinary schools, fell within the group termed: educationally sub-normal (moderate) (DES, 1978). Following the publication of the Warnock Report this group was given the description MLD. The Warnock Committee suggested that the difficulties seen in this group stemmed from: mild and multiple physical and sensory disabilities; specific learning difficulties; poor background, and limited general ability. They recommended support for this group in terms of curriculum development and research into the causes of their difficulties (DES, 1978). This supported an emerging social model of disability, whereby there was recognition that aspects of a child's environment could be adapted to support them, in this instance the curriculum content. This was in opposition to the medical view that only changes within the child themselves could create a difference in attainment.

MLD remains as the group description for children whose difficulties cross the spectrum of SEN and as such are difficult to define in any specific way. Crowther, Dyson and Millward (1998) attempted to define the group more specifically. They produced six sub groups: type A, mild learning difficulties; type B, more severe learning difficulties; type C behavioural and type D sensory/medical characteristics. The remaining two sub groups were formed from the combinations of learning difficulties with behavioural and sensory/medical characteristics (Crowther *et al*, 1998). Subsequently Norwich and Kelly (2005) suggested that the definition should be more complex. In their sample just sixteen per cent of children had MLD alone; the remainder were recorded as having MLD in addition to one or more other difficulties such as speech and language, or emotional and behavioural issues (Norwich and Kelly, 2005).

Rather than trying to find common groups for children's difficulties, the SEN Code of Practice, 2001 (Department for Education and Skills [DfES], 2001) refers to children's needs. It states that: "This guidance does not assume that there are hard and fast categories of special educational need." (DfES, 2001:85). Instead it suggests that children's needs fall into at least one of four areas, and may span several: communication and interaction; cognition and learning; behavioural, emotional and social, and sensory and/or physical. It is anticipated that children who demonstrate characteristics of MLD will have needs within the 'cognition and learning' area. This approach reflects Warnock's focus on SEN as opposed to categories (DES, 1978).

In contrast, the reporting of pupil data by schools through the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC), requires children to be classified by category. The Government collects pupil data to make comparisons between the achievements of pupils receiving different types of provision. A group such as MLD encompasses a wide range and mix of difficulties, so data collected will not necessarily be comparing like with like (Daniels and Porter, 2007). The *Special Educational Needs (Information) Act* (Department for Children, Schools and Families [DfCSF], 2008), requires data to be gathered with the aim of improving outcomes for children with SEN. The need to record data such as children's type of SEN suggests that, far from moving away from categorisation, the Government relies heavily upon it for the purposes of data gathering.

For the purposes of this research, it was agreed between the researcher and the LA to use the PLASC definition of MLD, which describes pupils with MLD as having:

> …attainments well below expected levels in all or most areas of the curriculum, despite appropriate interventions. Their needs will not be able to be met by normal differentiation and the flexibilities of the National Curriculum. Pupils with MLD have much greater difficulty than their peers in acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills and in understanding concepts. They may also have associated speech and language delay, low self-esteem, low levels of concentration and under-developed social skills.
>
> (DfES, 2005)

Despite the difficulties in defining MLD, it is this group of children that forms the largest proportion of children at the SAP level of SEN (Daniels and Porter, 2007). It is therefore important for research to focus on provision in this area. SAP suggests that, despite interventions put in place at lower levels of SEN,

pupils continue to demonstrate difficulties in relation to all or any of: literacy, maths, behaviour, communication and physical issues.

1.4 Changing policy

Whilst the Warnock Committee (DES, 1978) was in session, the *Education Act* (DES, 1976) was introduced to Parliament. Its main focus was the introduction of comprehensive education, however, Section 10 addressed the education of children with disabilities. It stated that the latter were to be educated in mainstream schools unless: the school was unable to meet their needs; their integration into the school would be detrimental to the efficient instruction of all pupils, or their integration would incur unreasonable cost. However, Section 10 was never implemented.

The *Education Act* (DES, 1981) became the vehicle for change in special education. It legislated for the implementation of some of the recommendations of the Warnock Report (DES, 1978), including the introduction of Statements of SEN (statements) and for children with SEN to be educated in mainstream schools, subject to the same three conditions stated previously. Although it did not state categorically what the future held for special schools (House of Commons [HC] Debs. Vol.998, col.27-102), it did include a clause preventing LAs from closing special schools without reference to the Secretary of State. Whilst promoting the idea of mainstream education for all children, MPs spoke of the continuing need for special provision for

some pupils with SEN. Parliamentary rhetoric therefore reflected a model of integration, whilst policy text promoted a more inclusive model of education.

In 1988 the *Education Reform Act* (*ERA*) (DES, 1988) brought substantial change to the education system and had unintended consequences for the education of pupils with SEN. In a desire to raise standards, the Government introduced a NC, national assessment at four KS3 and provided parents with a right to choose a school for their child. The anticipated negative impact of this legislation on pupils with SEN was the subject of contentious debate in both Houses of Parliament. In 1992 a review of education provision for children with SEN was conducted by the Audit Commission (Audit Commission/Her Majesty's Inspectorate [HMI], 1992). Its conclusions suggested that MPs had been right to be concerned.

The *ERA* (DES, 1988) introduced Local Management of Schools (LMS) and associated delegation of funding, which led head teachers to become particularly aware of the cost of SEN provision, to the extent that some refused to take pupils with SEN without guaranteed funding from LAs (Audit Commission/HMI, 1992). MPs noted that the publication of school results combined with greater parental choice, created a competitive school environment. The desire for schools to be at the top of the league tables to attract the more able pupils, disadvantaged pupils with SEN; they faced restricted school access and poor provision (Audit Commission/HMI, 1992; HC Debs. Vol.210, col.1078, 1096, 1110, 1117). The Audit Commission Report (Audit Commission/HMI: 1) identified: "…serious deficiencies in the way in

which children with special needs are identified and provided for." The report attributed these deficiencies to: ambiguity regarding the definition of SEN and the responsibilities of LAs and schools; lack of accountability on the part of schools for SEN funding they received, and by schools and LAs for their performance with pupils with SEN, and a lack of incentives to encourage LAs to implement the *Education Act* (DES, 1981). These issues resulted in widely varying numbers of pupils issued with statements across LAs. The report (Audit Commission/HMI 1992) made a number of recommendations for action, including: the publication of guidance relating to trigger points for SEN; that LAs should delegate funding for SEN provision to schools, and that inspection procedures should be more rigorous.

The Government subsequently introduced the *Education Act* (Department for Education [DfE], 1993) which established the Code of Practice, 1994 (Wall, 2006). This detailed a five stage process for the identification and assessment of SEN, culminating in a statement. It also gave prominence to the relationship between parents and LAs; supporting parents' right to choose a school for their child (Wall 2006; Wolfendale, 2001; Rix and Simmons, 2005).

In 1994 the Government of Spain in conjunction with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), hosted the World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality. The outcomes from this conference were presented in the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Educational Needs (Salamanca Statement, UNESCO, 1994). This document enshrined the principle of IE and called upon

governments around the world: "…to work towards 'schools for all' – institutions which include everybody, celebrate differences, support learning, and respond to individual needs." (UNESCO, 1994: iii). It described inclusive schools as more effective, suggesting that they provided the most efficient means by which to change attitudes towards diversity. Governments were urged to give the improvement of education systems the highest policy and budgetary priority. Much is made in the Salamanca Statement of the need for effective and cost-effective education systems, although it is recognised that the distribution of resources is not without its difficulties. The allocation of resources is complicated by the need to be equitable; the cost of providing each child with an appropriate education will vary (UNESCO, 1994).

In 1996 the Conservative Government enacted the *Education Act* (Department for Education and Employment [DfEE], 1996), which incorporated educating children in accordance with parents' wishes and some aspects of the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), such as inter-departmental working and improved assessment of SEN. However, the conditions attached to mainstream education in the *Education Act* (DES, 1976) remained, thus ensuring that LAs ultimately decided where children with SEN should be educated.

In 1997 the Labour Government published the Green Paper: 'Excellence for All Children: Meeting Special Educational Needs' (DfEE, 1997). The changes it described were set into a 3 year action plan in November 1998: 'Meeting SEN: A Programme of Action' (DfEE, 1998). Some of the changes described

required the passing of legislation resulting in the *Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA)* (DfES, 2001). This brought SEN into the equal opportunities arena along with race, sex and class (Wolfendale, 2001). The *SENDA* (DfES, 2001) strengthened the right of children with SEN to receive a mainstream education, unless: the child had a statement and a mainstream education was against parents' wishes, or a mainstream education would be incompatible with the efficient education of other pupils. The latter was one of the three conditions remaining from the *Education Act* (DES, 1976) and ensured that the balance of power remained with LAs. The *SENDA* (DfES, 2001) also led to a new SEN Code of Practice(DfES, 2001).

Parliamentary debate about the *SENDA* (DfES, 2001), demonstrated concern by MPs that the lack of provision for either the maintenance or enhancement of special provision in the Act, was putting parents' choice at risk. There was agreement across parties that whilst mainstream education should be the aim, there would be a need for special provision for some children. Whilst Ministers assured MPs that special provision would remain, nothing to this effect was added to the Act (HC Debs. Vol. 365, col.173-324). It was suggested that the Government had an implied agenda, tilting the balance towards inclusion (HC Debs. Vol.365, col.279). It may be this implied agenda that led LAs to start closing special schools, since those in Government did not appear to support this action either during debate or in policy text. MPs commented on the possibility that LAs acted according to hidden agendas, reducing special schools and costs (HC Debs. Vol.365, col.279). The *Education and Inspections Act* (DfES, 2006) placed a duty on LAs to promote choice and

diversity, but also provided them with a strategic role of establishing, altering or closing any maintained mainstream or special provision.

Improving outcomes for children remained a focus for the Government and in 2003 the Green Paper: Every Child Matters (ECM) (DfES, 2003), was published. It set out proposals for reforming children's services and improving child outcomes in five areas: being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and economic well-being. The implementation of these reforms was supported by the *Children Act* (DfES, 2004). Two developments in particular had a significant impact on SEN practice: the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and the 'Team Around the Child' (TAC). These facilitated professionals from different agencies in obtaining and sharing information about a child's needs, thereby providing a cohesive team approach to provision.

Following on from the ECM Agenda (DfES, 2003), 'Removing Barriers to Achievement: the Government's Strategy for SEN' (DfES, 2004) contained the Government's proposals for working with LAs, settings, health and voluntary organisations, to enable children and young people to achieve their potential (HC Debs. Vol.417, col.1435, 1429). It detailed how the Government planned to give effect to the legal framework (HC Debs. Vol.417, col.1435, 1429), focusing on: early intervention; removing barriers to learning; raising expectations and achievement, and developing partnership working. The Government wanted parents to be confident that their children would receive

the education they needed wherever they lived (HC Debs. Vol.417, col.1435, 1430).

The combination of the SEN Code of Practice(DfES, 2001), the ECM Agenda (DfES, 2003) and the Strategy for SEN (DfES, 2004) created substantial changes in practice for children with SEN.

1.5 Changing Practice

Providing parents with choice and strengthening their rights to influence their child's education, has been a key focus since the *Education Act* (DfEE, 1996). The Government's Strategy for SEN (DfES, 2004) highlighted the need for improved partnerships with parents. However, Brook (2008) suggested that providing parents with choice of school for their child has perpetuated the cycle of inequality in education: "…choice tends to work only for the well informed and confident clientele and when the supply side is secure and flexible enough to be able to adapt properly." (Brook, 2008: 16).

Since 1981 successive Education Acts have highlighted the need for parents of children with SEN to be provided with more information about their school choices. As stated in one HC debate: "Parents are not an homogeneous commodity…" (HC Debs. Vol.365, col. 266); some have the resources and ability to fight for the education they want for their child, but some cannot. Although it was recognised that information was being made available to parents in relation to education as a whole, Brook (2008) stated that it was

unclear whether families from lower socio-economic backgrounds took advantage of school choice. Articulate, socially advantaged parents, it seemed, were able to use legislation to their advantage, whilst the less able continued with the status quo.

Lack of funding for SEN has long been an issue. Despite the recommendations of the Audit Commission Report (Audit Commission/HMI, 1992), LAs continue to control funding for SEN, and may not necessarily spend it where intended by Government (Brook, 2008). Hence anticipated policy outcomes may not be forthcoming. Whilst this is recognised to be inequitable, successive Governments have been reluctant to delegate funds directly to schools. In 1981 MPs called for funding to be allocated for specific SEN provision; in February 2009, the chief executive of the National Association of SEN (Nasen) reported that because of the way budgets were allocated to schools and monitored, it was not possible to say how much of the available funding was actually spent on children with SEN (Maddern, 2009). Brook (2008) concurred: more needed to be done to monitor and evaluate provision in order to understand what works, particularly where this impacts upon poorer families. It was suggested that the UK could improve the efficiency of its spending.

The use of statements has been the subject of much debate in the HC; in 2001 it was reported that Statements had increased by twenty five per cent over five years, in part because parents were keen to secure provision for their child and viewed statements as a necessity. It was suggested that they were difficult to obtain and that a reluctance, or failure, to issue them in a timely manner, could

force children into mainstream education, whose parents would have chosen special provision (HC Debs. Vol.365, col.173-324).

National assessment as introduced by the *ERA* (DES, 1988) can provide information to support the inclusion of pupils with SEN in schools. However, testing has caused tensions for schools between achieving high results and attracting more able pupils, and the requirement to meet the needs of pupils with SEN (Farrell, 2005). It has been suggested that outcomes from assessment can be changed according to how they are analysed. For example, UK results showed improvements in performance over a period of years, however, when the results were analysed in relation to English and Maths, the improvement was less. It is also noted that academic achievement is not the sole outcome of education. The NC recognises personal, social and health education, however progress in these areas is difficult to measure (Brook, 2008).

Teacher training, discussed at length during HC debate in 1981 was an issue for further discussion in 2001 and the focus of attention in the Government's Strategy for SEN (DfES, 2004). With each Education Act has come a call for teacher training, without which it is recognised that an IE system cannot take shape (HC Debs. Vol.998, col.27-102; HC Debs. Vol.365, col.215-306). Effective pedagogy is essential for pupils with MLD. However, MPs noted that teachers struggled with behavioural issues in mainstream classrooms and required numerous teaching strategies to provide an effective education for all children, not only those with MLD (HC Debs. Vol.365, col.215-306).

Supporting teachers to provide the necessary practice has significant resource implications.

In addition to practitioner training, the role of TAs has been debated over recent years particularly in relation to children with SEN. There is concern that the least qualified practitioners are supporting the most needy children.

1.6 The research questions

The achievement of an effective education system that meets the needs of all children across a spectrum of difficulties, in a cost-effective and equitable manner (UNESCO, 1994) is proving difficult to achieve, however efforts continue towards this aim. To this end the research questions are as follows:

1. What is the policy to practice context for inclusion of pupils with MLD?
2. How do schools (head teachers and teachers) implement the policy regarding the inclusion of pupils with MLD?
3. What are the experiences of teachers and pupils with MLD in special and inclusive settings?
4. What are the views of the variety of stakeholders tasked with implementation of inclusion policy as practised at the school level?
5. What are the views of MLD pupils of inclusion policy as experienced by them?

1.7 Conclusion

Discussion has highlighted aspects of special education provision for which legislation has been enacted; demonstrated the confusion between rhetoric and practice, and identified that the same issues are frequently revisited.

In terms of the 'context of influence', debate in Parliament is influenced heavily by the personal experiences of MPs, and by the lobbying of constituents, associations, charities, and pressure groups. Whilst legislation and charters are introduced internationally, there is little reference to these in Parliamentary debate. It is possible that the content of international legislation appears in national policy by other means; associations and charities, such as the Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (CSIE), are knowledgeable about the content of such texts and use this in their lobbying. The link between international and national policy is not however explicit.

Policies and guidance abound in respect of SEN. At the core of each policy is the right of a child with SEN to receive a mainstream education, and it is this element that creates the contention and continuous debate that occurs around: defining inclusion; the mainstream versus special school debate; the provision of resources to create an inclusive environment; the roles and training of practitioners and appropriate pedagogy.

Far from providing firm and unambiguous guidance in these matters, governments produce policy texts that have been described as weak, vague

and discretionary (HC Debs. Vol.998, col.52). Parliamentary debates are littered with references to LAs misinterpreting policy and using vague terminology to their advantage. Defenders of the LAs argue that they are best placed to make many of the decisions based on local conditions (House of Lords [HL] Debs. Vol.376, col.801-872; HC Debs. Vol.998, col.27-102; HL Debs. Vol.422, col.1491-556; HC Debs. Vol.365, col.173-324) and there remains a reluctance to direct LAs in relation to SEN spending (Brook 2008). These factors create inconsistencies in provision across LAs and hence inequality in relation to meeting the needs of individual children. It also suggests that the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of provision may be questionable.

With regard to the context of practice, the evidence given above suggests that whilst policies are developed and published, changing practice is a complicated process. Individuals approach policies in the light of their own experience and knowledge (Bowe *et al*, 1992) and interpretations therefore vary from person to person. Hence policy enactment is far from straightforward and can have unintended outcomes.

The issues outlined above in terms of evolving concepts and changing policy and practice will be debated from the point of view of existing literature in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a review of literature that focuses upon the aspects of SEN covered by the research questions, namely: the current policy to practice context within which children with SEN, and in particular children with MLD, are educated. It examines aspects of: international governance; the human rights approach to inclusion; models of disability; national policy and inclusive practice.

This review is framed within the Bowe *et al* (1992) model of the continuous policy cycle, and hence will be divided into three sections, the contexts of: influence, policy text production and practice. The relationship between these three elements is said to be symbiotic; each relying on the other, albeit in an uneasy relationship (Bowe *et al*, 1992). The different contexts are interwoven, each directly impacting upon, and being influenced by, the other, as demonstrated in the following discussion.

2.1 Context of Influence

National SEN policy and guidance is influenced by a number of factors, primarily the attitudes and beliefs of society, as depicted by the medical and

social models of disability, international governance, particularly the Salamanca statement (UNESCO, 1994), and human rights issues.

2.1.1 Models of disability

Disability as a concept is socially constructed and as such has changed over time (Chappell, Goodley and Lawthom, 2001). Society's changing attitudes to disability have been reflected in two key models of disability: the medical and social models. The attitudes and beliefs reflected in these models have influenced policy content, and been influenced by policy.

The medical model identified a period in time when medical professionals were the key decision makers in relation to the diagnosis of disabilities and difficulties, and the identification of appropriate interventions (Lindsay, 2003; Lindsay, 2007; Terzi, 2007). Even after publication of the Warnock Report (DES, 1978) it was decided in the House of Lords, that responsibility for advising parents of their child's disability or learning difficulty would remain with the Health Authority (HL Debs. Vol.422, Col.1491-1556).

Although the medical model is criticised for focusing solely on within-child difficulties and affording the medical profession too much power over parents and children (Norwich and Kelly, 2005), it remains in evidence in current practice. The issue of statements requires children to be considered in isolation (Lauchlan and Boyle, 2007) and evidence supports the view that professionals focus on individual characteristics, rather than considering

environmental factors, when assessing SEN (Frederickson and Cline, 2002). A medical model approach is suggested to justify an integrated approach to education, whereby schools continue as before, but make additional arrangements for pupils with SEN (Farrell, 2005; Frederickson and Cline, 2002).

The Warnock Report (DES, 1978) recommended that learning difficulties should be considered in terms of a spectrum of needs as opposed to a medical category of difficulty, and that consideration should be given to the impact of environmental factors in a child's educational setting. This thinking reflected a social model of disability, which became prominent in the late 1970s (Lindsay, 2003; DES, 1978). It emphasised the identification and removal of environmental factors that affected an individual's ability to function. At its most extreme, the social model places full responsibility for an individual's difficulties upon environmental barriers, taking no account of the interaction between the individual and the environment (Lindsay, 2007; Terzi, 2007).

The social model is criticised for focusing on environmental issues to the exclusion of within-child factors (Lindsay, 2003). More recent models of disability take account of both individual and social aspects. There is agreement that children's ability to function and their individual needs reflect the interaction between them and their environment; an interactive model of disability (Lindsay, 2003; Lindsay, 2007; Frederickson and Cline, 2002; Terzi, 2007). This interaction, and hence the child's needs, change over time (Lindsay, 2003; Lindsay, 2007). A model that can take account of the

interaction between individual, physical and social contexts is the bio-psycho-social model described as "…an inter-disciplinary, multi-level and interactive framework." (Norwich and Kelly, 2005:7). In an IE environment, this framework allows for individual characteristics, class and school contexts to be taken into account. Influences and processes permeate all levels and must therefore be considered as a whole, thus preventing dominance by any one element. Therefore, planning for an individual intervention necessitates consideration of the environmental context; similarly, class and school level planning would necessitate consideration of an individual's needs, and the school/class's ability to meet those needs (Norwich and Kelly, 2005). Thinking about disability in these broader terms changes the way in which SEN is approached in schools, encouraging an inclusive focus, where inclusion is described as: "…aiming to encourage schools to reconsider their structure, teaching approaches, pupil grouping and use of support so that the school responds to the perceived needs of all its pupils." (Farrell, 2005:91).

2.1.2 International governance and human rights

It can be argued that inclusion has its foundations in Human Rights legislation. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), 1990 Article 28 (United Nations Children's Fund, 1995), states that all children have the right to receive an education, in addition to the rights not to be discriminated against (Article 2), and for primary consideration to be given to their best interests (Article 3). The Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) reinforced the right of children to an education, and called for member

countries to develop education systems to take account of human diversity. It articulated international agreement that education for all in regular schools was the most effective way to achieve a cohesive society. It asserted that this approach to education would improve both the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the whole system, whilst providing an effective education for the majority of children. Lindsay (2003) questioned the meaning of the term 'regular' schools, suggesting that 'regular' would be perceived differently in different contexts. No evidence in favour of either mainstream or special provision was found, raising doubts about the basis upon which this influential statement was based. However, whether there is evidence in favour of inclusion could be considered irrelevant if an inclusive education is considered to be a right as opposed to a choice (Lindsay, 2003).

The human rights argument for inclusion is promoted forcefully by radical groups supporting full inclusion such as the CSIE and Parents for Inclusion (Cigman, 2007). Their viewpoint is an ideological one, in which mainstream schools are equipped and supported in a manner that facilitates the inclusion of all children. Whilst this may be an ideal it does not take account of the realities within which practitioners currently operate. It has been described as a 'naïve' position (Farrell, 2001).

Full inclusionists (CSIE, 2009; CSIE, 2009a) contend that the continued use of special schools violates children's rights and breaches key principles underpinning the UNCRC (UNCF, 1995). However, the governance used to justify the human rights position, in particular the Salamanca Statement

(UNESCO, 1994), does not call for the closure of all special schools, rather that they should be used as a last resort. There is also an argument that whilst children have a right to a mainstream education, this does not mean that they have to avail themselves of that right (Low, 2007; Cigman, 2007).

Those in favour of full inclusion place the right of a child to a mainstream education ahead of a parents' right to choose the education that they feel is right for their child (Farrell, 2001; Croll and Moses, 2000). This contrasts with English legislation that gives primacy to parental views. In addition, legislation states that the inclusion of children with SEN in mainstream classes, should not be detrimental to the effective education of other children. The forced inclusion of all children in mainstream classes would, it is argued, be to deny the right of other pupils to an effective education (Farrell, 2001).

Article 3 of the UNCRC, 1990 (UNCF, 1995) articulates the right of a child to have their best interests taken into account in decisions affecting them. English legislation does not refer to the 'best interests of the child', despite pressure during parliamentary debate to have this wording included. The Government considered that to include this wording would raise questions regarding who was most qualified to decide what was in a child's best interests and could result in parents being over-ruled (HL Debs. Vol. no.365, col.173-324).

Despite these issues, the human rights argument has influenced Government policy (Lindsay, 2006; Farrell, 2001). Policy text supports IE; MPs rhetoric

demonstrates a more moderate approach to inclusion, with regular references to a continuing need for special provision for some children. The tensions between international and national governance are evident; full inclusion versus parental choice. This is reflected in the tensions demonstrated between national policy and parliamentary rhetoric.

The position of society with regard to disability, and the influences discussed above, is fundamental to the creation of IE policy in England. The democratic process of government enables lobby groups and other interested parties to be active in influencing the direction of Government policy (Bowe *et al*, 1992), and the contentious context of SEN means that there are many positions to be balanced. Bowe *et al* (1992:13) describe policy as a discourse between knowledge and practice, reflecting "…a set of claims about how the world should and might be,…", an ideal. The necessity for policy to reflect an ideal, to be general rather than specific in order to be relevant in many contexts, means that it is open to (re)interpretation (Bowe *et al*, 1992).

Wenger (1998, cited in Ainscow, Conteh, Dyson, and Gallanaugh, 2007) considered the impact of context on policy initiatives. It was suggested that potentially non-inclusive policy could be influenced by the context within which it was implemented to such a degree that the final outcome was inclusive practice. Dyson and Gallanaugh (Ainscow *et al*, 2007) supported this view; teachers in a primary setting responded to poor performance and pressure for improvement, by reviewing the learning needs of pupils and taking a fresh approach to their literacy teaching. By a process of experiential learning pupils

were supported to a point where they could benefit from the teaching approaches required by the National Literacy Strategy. In this way, policy that was potentially detrimental to pupils of lower ability (the requirement to raise standards) became an opportunity to review and improve inclusive practice.

Policy-makers believe that policy, developed by Government can deliver system improvements. To achieve this within a diverse population, pupils as the focus of policy must be grouped in ways that it is perceived will be manageable at the level of implementation. To enact the policy initiatives, practitioners are required to similarly categorise the population thus reinforcing policy. To move away from this process, it is suggested that Government policy should provide goals, guidance and resources that facilitate practitioners in responding to local needs, thus enabling teachers to use their knowledge and skills to provide the learning experiences required (Ainscow *et al*, 2007). This approach is supported by Nind and Wearmouth (2006: 122) who find that: "…policymakers often advocate IE without an understanding of the pedagogical approaches that teachers can use to operationalise the policy." A point supported by special school leaders who suggest that policy makers have little understanding of the practical implications of their policy (Attfield and Williams, 2003). Ainscow *et al* (2007) suggest that for school staff to approach issues in the manner described above, school leaders must develop capacity within their settings, providing teachers with the skills and opportunities necessary to progress learning within the setting beyond implementing Government dictated initiatives.

2.2 Context of Policy Text Production

Representations of policy take many forms and are difficult to control; a speedy response to new legislation can influence people's interpretation of it, whilst a lack of coherence and clarity can render a policy open to misinterpretation (Bowe *et al*, 1992). This section considers key changes in thinking and practice in SEN policy, from the Warnock Report (DES, 1978) to the present.

Efforts to define inclusion have failed to produce a definitive result, although common themes view inclusion as a process (Booth and Ainscow, 2002; National Association of Head Teachers cited in Cigman, 2007; Farrell, Dyson, Polat, Hutcheson and Gallannaugh, 2007), and as a place in a mainstream setting (Frederickson and Cline, 2002; Farrell, 2005; Farrell *et al*, 2007). Dyson (cited in Rix and Simmons, 2005) suggests that, rather than having one form of inclusion, there should be a range of practice and organisation.

The Government states that inclusion is about the quality of a child's experience and how they are supported to learn, achieve and participate in school life (DfES, 2004). The Education and Skills Committee (HC, 2006: 106) stated that: "…the Government's changing definition of inclusion is causing confusion" and that to be used in policy documents, the term needed specific definition. In its Response (HC, 2006a), the Government referred to inclusion in general terms as being about the quality of a child's experience, but failed to provide a definitive definition, and made no reference to the placement of children with differing levels of SEN in mainstream settings (Norwich, 2008).

Special school leaders believe that without a clear definition of inclusion it is impossible to identify success; success will be perceived differently by different stakeholders (Attfield and Williams, 2003).

Research evidence suggests that the principle of inclusion is widely accepted (Croll and Moses, 2000; Dyson, Farrell, Hutcheson, Polat and Gallannaugh, 2004); people see it as a moral issue, although they question its application (Croll and Moses, 2000). Three approaches to inclusion have been identified: an ideal, but not related to current practice; a realistic aim and a mechanism for change; unrealisable but not irrelevant (Croll and Moses, 2000). The latter enables people to criticise the current system, whilst not accepting that full inclusion is a realistic aim.

Policy is set within a framework of inclusion. As discussed above, inclusion as an ideology is not contested. The problems occur at the level of interpretation and practice (Lindsay, 2003). As Norwich (2007) observed, it is the extent and nature of inclusion that causes the issues. Lindsay (2003) suggests that focus needs to move from inputs and settings to experiences and outcomes, in order that children's rights and the effectiveness of education can be addressed.

2.2.1 Mainstream placement and parental rights

The *Education Acts* (DES, 1976; DES, 1981) stated the right of children with SEN to a mainstream education, subject to conditions that endeavoured to balance the interests of stakeholders, namely that the inclusion of children with

SEN should be: practicable, that is, schools must be able to meet their needs, compatible with the efficient instruction of all children, and not incur an unreasonable cost. These conditions remained until 2001, when the *SENDA* (DfES, 2001) amended Section 316 of the *Education Act* (DfEE, 1996) and the conditions reduced to two: a mainstream education was incompatible with parents' wishes, or the efficient education of other children. The latter only being relevant where there were no reasonable steps that could be taken to include children (DfES, 2001a; Lindsay, 2003). Cost was no longer cited as a reason for refusing a child a mainstream place, and mainstream settings could no longer refuse to take a child with a statement, on the grounds that their needs could not be met (DfES, 2001a; Frederickson and Cline, 2002). The omission of the cost condition implied that the Government no longer believed that such protection was necessary (Lindsay, 2003).

Parents' right to choose their child's education has strengthened over time. In 1981, parents whose children had a statement could make known their choice of school. The *Education Act* (DfE, 1993) instructed LAs to give priority to parents' wishes and created the SEN Tribunal. The *SENDA* (DfES, 2001) required that they be given better information about school choices, and an opportunity to negotiate the outcome of any decisions with the LA (Frederickson and Cline, 2002). Legislation has been used to balance the power between LAs and parents (Frederickson and Cline, 2002).

The provision of choice for parents requires LAs to retain, fund and develop special schooling, whilst additionally funding the development of special

provision within mainstream settings. However, whilst parents' rights have been strengthened by policy, in practice, bureaucracy can reduce their involvement in the school selection process (Riddell, Wilson, Adler and Mordaunt, 2005; HC, 2006), and reliance on LAs to issue statements can frustrate their attempts to send their child to the school of their choice (Warnock, 2007).

Parents must choose their role; either accepting the decisions made by the authorities, or becoming their child's advocate (Hess, Molina and Kozleski, 2006). In a system where resources are finite, support can be dependent upon being heard (Dyson, 2005; Cigman, 2007; Farrell, 2001), and the statement is seen as a way of guaranteeing provision amidst uncertainty (Dyson, 2005). Whilst statements articulate the type and quantity of provision, they do not indicate the quality of that provision. Parents see assessment as positive, however they do not believe that the type and quantity of provision stipulated in statements meets children's needs (Ofsted, 2006). Some parents consider that decisions regarding provision for children are based on finance available as opposed to need (Wedell, 2008). However, with the increasing move towards mainstream education for all children, parents are concerned about protecting support for their child (Elkins, van Kraayenoord and Jobling, 2003). Statements have become a means by which articulate parents can use the system to obtain support for their child, to the detriment of those children whose parents are less articulate and unable to manipulate the system in the same way (Cigman, 2007).

The spectrum of needs described in the Warnock report (DES, 1978) encouraged practitioners to view individuals in terms of their educational needs. It simultaneously raised issues with regards to trigger points for different levels or types of SEN (Farrell, 2001), for example the level of need that would warrant special provision in terms of statements and/or special school (Cigman, 2007; Lunt, 2007). This lack of clarity prevented statements being allocated consistently and equitably.

In an attempt to clarify the situation, the SEN Code of Practice(DfE, 1994) introduced a five stage process for identifying and assessing SEN, culminating in the issue of a statement. However, the process lacked clarity and was superseded by a framework incorporated in the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001). Within this framework school staff and at more complex levels of SEN, external professionals, decide the type of intervention appropriate for individual children. However, the Code indicates that this is: "…a framework within which it is important that schools, LEAs and other agencies involved develop the detail of local interpretation." (DfES, 2001:96). The Code therefore provides a general guide, whilst LAs and schools determine the detail, again leaving room for inconsistency and inequality of provision. Special school leaders have commented that whilst there are common underlying principles in relation to policy, LA practice varies widely (Attfield and Williams, 2003). Evidence demonstrates that levels of SEN that warrant statements, and numbers of statements issued, have varied between LAs continually over time (Audit Commission/HMI, 1992; Daniels and Porter, 2007). This suggests that policy text is not supporting an equitable system.

2.2.2 SEN terminology and labelling

Ambiguous SEN terminology adds to difficulties in achieving consistency. Prior to the Warnock Report (DES, 1978), the term 'handicapped' was used to describe people with disabilities and learning difficulties. Warnock preferred Professor Gulliford's term 'special educational needs' (Wedell, 2005) and whilst it has become a commonly used term, it has no clear definition (Audit Commission/HMI, 1992; Terzi, 2007). This has created a situation in which the use of categories has returned to the fore, and terminology continues to support the notion of a medical model (Terzi, 2007). Categories that are based upon a medical diagnosis, provide limited information focusing on within-child matters, rather than whole child scenarios. This makes them of limited value to policy-makers in developing education provision, that must take account of both environmental and within-child issues (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2007).

The term MLD was introduced in place of 'educationally sub-normal' (DES, 1978), but provides no greater explanation of the difficulties of children categorised as such. The Government has admitted that this is the hardest group to define (Norwich and Kelly, 2005). Attempts to achieve greater clarity have been made: Crowther *et al* (1998) produced a model of MLD that consisted of six profiles, as discussed Chapter 1, however the research of Norwich and Kelly (2005) suggested that even this complex definition was insufficient to encompass the difficulties of those allocated to this category.

The PLASC (DfES, 2005) definition of MLD raises further issues of definition and policy focus. It refers to the needs of children with MLD not being met by 'normal differentiation' of the curriculum. However, the Government's Strategy for SEN refers to tailoring: "…the curriculum to provide all pupils with relevant and appropriately challenging work,…" (DfES, 2004:65; Ofsted, 2004). This suggests that differentiation to any degree should be considered 'normal'. There is also reference in the definition to difficulty in acquiring skills and understanding concepts, which is a reminder of traditional intelligence quotient measures (Norwich and Kelly, 2005; Frederickson and Cline, 2002). The complexity of producing a definition of MLD indicates that the term has different meanings for different people. Who to include within the category is a subjective judgement (Lauchlan and Boyle, 2007) and hence those included will display a range of characteristics. An issue with the PLASC definition is the assumption that all children included within it are the same (Daniels and Porter, 2007), which they are not. However, practitioners are required to categorise pupils to produce statistical data, and the PLASC definition of MLD supports this function.

Labelling children in terms of their disability or learning difficulty can have negative outcomes, for example: labelling can suggest a focus on within-child issues; the use of inappropriate provision; expectations of children may be reduced; incorrect assumptions may be made regarding ability, and an ambiguous label may hinder discussions between professionals whose understanding of the term is not in accord (Lauchlan and Boyle, 2007; Farrell, 2001; Frederickson and Cline, 2002). However, there is also an argument that

a label facilitates the process of obtaining support for a child with SEN, and hence protects their rights (DES, 1978; Lauchlan and Boyle, 2007). It was the view that labels needed to be replaced by some other form of protection of children's rights that led the Warnock Committee to recommend the introduction of statements (DES, 1978).

The SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001) avoids categorising pupils, instead referring to four areas of learning that children with SEN may struggle with. It refers to the possibility of school management, ethos and the learning environment, helping to prevent or minimise some SEN. It also states that: "…schools should not assume that pupils' learning difficulties always result solely, or even mainly, from problems within the young person." (DfES, 2001: 62), reflecting a social model perspective, in contrast to the PLASC (Wedell, 2005). Government policy is therefore in conflict; guidance in respect of daily practice reflects the social model of disability, whilst data collection necessitates the use of categories; the medical model.

The OECD (2007) listed the UK as having a non-categorical system in relation to SEN data collection. UK data were divided between students with SEN, with and without statements. In terms of cross-national SEN categories, students with statements were listed in category A, defined as students with disabilities or impairments where their needs arise from their disabilities. Students without statements were included in category B, defined as students with behavioural, emotional difficulties, or specific learning difficulties, where needs emanate from the interaction between them and their educational environment. It was

suggested that pupils in category B, which would include those with MLD, should be able to receive their education in mainstream schools, providing the education system is geared up to support children with SEN (OECD, 2007). As discussed, Government policy conflicts; data collection reflects the medical model, and daily practice requires a social model perspective. OECD category B suggests that both the individual and the environment warrant attention (Norwich and Kelly, 2005), reflecting the need for an interactive model of disability.

2.2.3 The special school population and role

Figures indicate that since 2000 the number of children educated in special schools has remained constant (Daniels and Porter, 2007), whilst the number of children with statements has increased (Daniels and Porter, 2007; Lunt 2007). As a percentage of children with statements therefore, numbers in special schools have effectively reduced over this period (Daniels and Porter, 2007). The characteristics of children attending special schools are perceived to have changed, with one in ten pupils now considered to have SLD (Male cited in Frederickson and Cline, 2002; Norwich and Kelly, 2004) Parental choice is cited as one reason for this change (Frederickson and Cline, 2002). To continue the downward trend in numbers in special schools towards a population of one per cent or less, pupils with MLD will need to be included in mainstream education (Norwich and Kelly, 2004). This suggests that Government policy is having an effect in respect of where children are educated.

The Education and Skills Committee (HC, 2006) stated that there was confusion with regard to the future of special schools and that the Government had failed to provide strategic direction in this regard. It identified a conflict in policy, pointing out that the Strategy for SEN (DfES, 2004) talked of reducing numbers in special school, but evidence for their enquiry indicated that the Government had no plans to close special schools, being content to maintain the current situation. In its Response, the Government stated that it: "…sees a vital and continuing role for special schools as part of an inclusive education system, meeting children's needs directly and working in much closer partnership with mainstream schools to build expertise throughout the system." (HC, 2006a: 26), reflecting the strategy for SEN (DfES, 2004).

The use of special schools as resource centres that support clusters of mainstream settings, was considered to be a cost-effective use of resources (UNESCO, 1994; UNESCO, 2005).

In contrast, views of special school leaders suggested that whilst there is a clear commitment to inclusion, the role of special schools within the inclusive continuum of provision is undeveloped in terms of national policy (Attfield and Williams, 2003). There were disadvantages for pupils in special provision of their teachers providing an outreach service: teachers were no longer available to support pupils in special school, and some staff were not happy providing that service instead of teaching their own pupils (Ainscow, Farrell, Tweddle and Malki, 1999). Further, there were those who considered resourced units or situations of co-location to be add-on's to the main setting,

with their own separate identity and culture, in themselves creating barriers to inclusion (Ainscow *et al*, 1999).

2.2.4 Standards and SEN

The *ERA* (DES, 1988) instigated pupil testing and school competition; a policy that impacted heavily on the inclusion of children with SEN in mainstream settings. The introduction of the NC provided consistency in what children were to learn nationwide. This was accompanied by pupil testing at each KS, the results of which were published in league tables. The aim of policy was to stimulate competition between schools thus raising standards and providing parents with greater choice (Frederickson and Cline, 2002). Raising standards, providing choice and meeting diverse needs have become central factors in SEN policy since 1988 (Lindsay, 2003). However, it is suggested that choice: "…tends only to work for a well-informed and confident clientele and when the supply side is secure and flexible enough to be able to adapt properly…" (Brook, 2008: 16).

Evidence that school competition has led to improvements in efficiency is limited (Duckworth, Akerman, Morrison, Gutman and Vorhaus, 2009), however it has resulted in unintended consequences for children with SEN. The national league tables provide parents with information about schools' achievements, and whilst 'value-added' scores are available, parents are likely to focus on schools' academic results, selecting those with the highest standards (Farrell, 2005; Brook, 2008). In their desire to attract the most able

pupils, schools could be disadvantaging pupils with SEN (HC, 2006). There are very able pupils who can achieve the desired standards without additional support; pupils who, with additional support, will also achieve the required standards, and those with statements who have an entitlement to additional support. This leaves children with SEN but no statement who are unlikely, even with support, to achieve the desired test scores. It is this latter group who are likely to be neglected through this process of 'educational triage', as schools focus resources towards those pupils whose results will support the achievement of targets (Farrell, 2005; Duckworth *et al*, 2009). This group is likely to include those at SA and SAP levels of SEN, including children with MLD (Farrell 2005). There is also the suggestion that schools deploy their most effective teachers in year groups that are approaching national assessments (Brook, 2008).

Warnock (DES, 1978) warned that there should not be so many children with SEN in a school that it changed the nature of the school, or that it caused a sub-group to develop within the school. In situations where schools have developed a good reputation for supporting pupils with SEN, head teachers have articulated their desire to avoid such a reputation to "protect the balance of their intake", and to prevent resources from becoming overstretched (Ofsted, 2004: 8). It was found that schools admitting large numbers of pupils with SEN had falling pupil numbers; resulting in higher proportions of children with SEN in classes. It was also noted that in classes with few good role models, pupil behaviour can deteriorate, resulting in schools becoming less popular choices (Ofsted, 2004). This raises questions regarding good practice in terms of the

balance of children in schools and classes with and without SEN. There is a lack of research evidence in this respect.

A majority of children with MLD are from low socio-economic backgrounds and school competition has had a further consequence for these children. As schools' results improve they become more popular with parents, and those in a position to move to be in the catchment areas for these 'good' schools. This results in children from low socio-economic backgrounds finding it harder to access the better schools as middle class parents work the system in their favour (Duckworth *et al*, 2009; Field, Kuczera and Pont, 2008; Brook, 2008).

Data gathered from schools indicate an improvement in educational attainment, particularly in relation to the primary age group (Brook, 2008). However, evidence from OECD international comparison data (Brook, 2008) indicates that whilst top performing pupils in the UK perform similarly to top performers in other OECD countries, the gap in attainment widens as results for middle and lower (not the lowest) performing pupils are considered. This is evidenced in relation to reading performance where primary pupils in England at the middle to lower end of the performance distribution, fall behind pupils of similar ability in the highest performing OECD countries, before they finished primary school. Concerns that a focus on poor performers will have a negative impact on outcomes for high performers in primary education are not borne out by evidence from OECD data: "…there is no trade-off between high average achievement and equality of educational opportunity…" (Brook, 2008: 13). This suggests that to raise the average performance figures for the UK in

relation to other countries, there needs to be a focus on outcomes for pupils in this middle to lower performing range. It is suggested that this might be achieved through, for example, a reduction in testing and targets, a greater focus on supporting weak schools and students with lower ability and better allocation of funding to bring about equality of opportunities (Brook, 2008).

The Government's policy of raising school standards inadvertently became a barrier to the inclusion of children with SEN (Farrell, 2005; Ainscow *et al*, 1999) by creating tensions between standards and inclusion at school level (Daniels and Porter, 2007). It has been identified that there is a need for greater focus on formative assessment as opposed to the current preoccupation with summative assessment of schools (Wedell, 2005) and clarity regarding the required outcomes of inclusion at pupil level (Attfield and Williams, 2003). The *SEN Information Act* (DfCSF 2008) supports this process by providing more detailed information about children with SEN (Duckworth *et al*, 2009).

2.2.5 The National Curriculum

The introduction of the NC in 1988, provided all children with consistency in terms of what they were to learn throughout their school career. Warnock (DES, 1978) suggested that education had two purposes; the first related to the development of knowledge and understanding, and the second to becoming an active and contributing adult in society. The UNCRC (UNCF, 1995) emphasised the role of education in developing the individual to their fullest potential and preparing them for participation in a free society.

Individuals will achieve these goals to varying degrees; some children needing additional support to do so (Dyson, 2005). It is suggested that the focus on what children learn and why they learn it needs to be greater so that children who may struggle can be identified and supported (Dyson, 2005). It has been suggested that the curriculum in its current form triggers poor behaviour because it fails to engage the diverse range of pupils in schools (Wedell, 2008).

Ofsted states that: "…adapting the curriculum to meet the pupils' needs is an essential part of an effective approach to inclusion." (Ofsted, 2004: 13). However, their research failed to identify more than a few settings that had adequately adapted the curriculum to meet pupil needs; in particular delivery of the primary and KS3 curriculum lacked flexibility. Greater flexibility was identified in the delivery of the KS4 curriculum. Ofsted (2006) considered that a range of outcomes for pupils was important, including academic and vocational achievement, and personal and social development. Crowther *et al* (1998) found that schools and LAs placed emphasis on social, affective, life chance, and academic outcomes.

2.2.6 Funding

Resourcing is a key issue for IE in England. There is agreement that an inclusive system requires significant funding that has not been forthcoming (DES, 1978; Croll and Moses, 2000; Ainscow *et al*, 1999; UNESCO, 2005; HC, 2006). The Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) asserts that changes to

policy and priorities cannot be effective if they are not adequately resourced. The Government allocates resources with the intention that LAs use them to support particular initiatives. However, evidence gathered in relation to Government funding to address deprivation, suggested that some LAs were unaware of the purpose of the funding, disagreed with the use of funding for the purpose stated, or preferred to treat schools equally (Brook, 2008). LAs tend to base decisions about what is affordable on either policy or existing practice (Ainscow *et al*, 1999).

Despite this evidence, decisions regarding how SEN funding is allocated to schools lies with LAs (Brook, 2008), who can specify how it is to be used. LAs would lose this level of control if budgets were to be allocated in their entirety to schools (Marks, 2000; Audit Commission/HMI, 1992) as, once allocated, school management would make the majority of decisions with regards to resource deployment (Audit Commission, 2009). This, in conjunction with a lack of clarity regarding what constitutes different levels of SEN, could lead to inconsistencies in provision, and hence in equality of opportunity. The delegation of funding through levels of decision-making explains why outcomes of policy are not always as intended (Brook, 2008).

Lack of trust between LAs and schools could be overcome by making schools accountable for their performance in relation to children with SEN. There has been on-going criticism of the system for the lack of data available, and of school accountability regarding SEN spend (Audit Commission/HMI, 1992; Ainscow *et al*, 1999; Marks, 2000; Audit Commission, 2009). This has raised

concerns that too little consideration is given to issues of effectiveness, efficiency and equity in the allocation of resources (Daniels and Porter, 2007).

The Audit Commission (2009: 11) defines cost-effectiveness as: "…the extent to which objectives have been achieved…" and cost-efficiency as: "…the relationship between outputs and the resources used to produce them…". It contends that whilst schools do consider cost-effectiveness, they take no account of either cost-efficiency or economy in their decision making. Schools, however, believe that Ofsted inspections focus upon effectiveness as opposed to economy or efficiency, and that value for money is a low priority for inspectors (Audit commission, 2009).

UNESCO (2005) cites evidence for inclusion being a more cost effective and cost efficient means of educating all children, and suggests that member countries are becoming increasingly aware of the inefficiency of having multiple systems running in parallel. Herein lies a financial dilemma for LAs in terms of funding provision in mainstream settings that benefits few individuals, or funding provision in one setting that benefits a community (Lindsay, 2003). In terms of rights and equality of opportunity, providing resources in individual settings denies individuals across several settings equal opportunities, whilst one central resource denies children a choice (Lindsay 2003). Therefore whilst international governance (UNESCO, 1994; UNESCO, 2005) states that mainstream education for all is the most cost effective means of education, Lindsay (2003) argues that the provision of resources in one location is more cost effective and efficient, although inhibits choice. It is recognised that

central limits on LA spending, inhibits the ability of LAs to support schools in achieving value for money, since they are unable to provide additional LA services that would cause them to exceed their budget (Audit Commission, 2009).

There is a need to identify and evaluate different types of provision to ensure value for money, and a generally more cost-effective system (Brook, 2008; Crowther *et al*, 1998; Ainscow *et al*, 1999; Ofsted, 2004). Cross school comparisons of spend are difficult to achieve due to the way in which funding is allocated and outcomes measured, therefore analysis of cost-effectiveness and efficiency are limited to individual school level (Audit Commission, 2009). The current system of SEN requires attention to be focused on individual needs rather than paying attention to shared characteristics. The suggestion that every child's needs are different leads to the assumption that comparison is inappropriate, and inhibits the formation of a bank of knowledge that would facilitate the creation of effective solutions (Dyson, 2005). Lindsay (2003) however, stated that whilst children have unique characteristics, they still have salient features in common. To identify the shared characteristics of children with difficulties, and/or the schools they attend, would facilitate the development of effective interventions and hence equity in the education system (Dyson, 2005). In addition the sharing of good practice would help to promote classroom pedagogy known to benefit pupils with SEN (Sheehy, Rix, Collins, Hall, Nind and Wearmouth, 2009). Lindsay (2003) also sees benefits in evaluating the effectiveness of particular aspects of inclusion as opposed to the effectiveness of inclusion itself.

It is suggested that schools could reduce spending through better planning in terms of utilising the workforce to best effect, collaborating with other schools to share resources and information, and developing federations of schools, thus benefitting from economies of scale (Audit Commission, 2009; HC, 2006).

2.3 Context of Practice

Discussion will focus on the dilemmas faced by teachers in their practice as a consequence of the inclusive agenda, in terms of striving to provide an equitable education for all children.

At the point of implementation, policy developed for a broad audience, must be applied within a specific context. It is described as: "…textual interventions…" that "…carry with them material constraints and possibilities." (Bowe *et al*, 1992:21).

Remote from the policy makers, and with their own knowledge and experience to influence their response, practitioners develop their own interpretations of the policy intent. They may respond by implementing the policy in full, changing their practice accordingly; adapting it to fit with existing practice, or absorbing it into existing practice without making any changes (Saunders, 1985 cited in Bowe *et al*, 1992). The outcome of previous policies can impact positively or negatively on an individual's response to new initiatives, for example, previous negative teaching experiences with SEN, may cause a

negative response to new initiatives; there is a fear factor (Ainscow *et al*, 1999).

LAs similarly are influenced by previous experience in responding to new policies, and in their overall approach to inclusion (Ainscow *et al*, 1999). Government control of policy therefore varies through the cycle of development and implementation. Whilst MPs may debate and agree policy content, whether policy achieves the intended outcomes depends on the specificity of the text, the goodwill of practitioners, and the ability of Government to enforce its implementation in specific ways (Bowe *et al*, 1992). Poorly implemented policy can create barriers to inclusion, for example, the liberal use of statements reduces funding available to others; schools and LAs tussle for scarce SEN resources, and children with individual education plans (IEPs) can be marginalised by their use (Ainscow *et al*, 1999). Policy targeted at specific issues may have greater success than general policy, for example, the Sure Start initiative. However, it is possible that targeted initiatives may not be utilised by the target audience for a variety of reasons such as stigma (Duckworth *et al*, 2009).

With Government control over schools reducing and delegation increasing, LAs are in a key position to be able to implement and manage policy initiatives. However, for LAs to lead implementation, they require clear guidance from Government and the authority to make change happen, in an environment where there are many, often competing, priorities (Ainscow *et al*, 1999), for

example, implementing new inclusive practice in mainstream settings, whilst maintaining special provision.

2.3.1 Pedagogical dilemmas

If children's needs are considered in terms of a spectrum, the majority of children in mainstream classes will have few or no additional needs. The remainder will have additional needs on an increasing scale. In terms of pedagogical approach, classroom interventions either focus on the common needs of all the children, that is, their sameness, or on the additional needs of the few; their differences. To focus on sameness is to meet the needs of the majority but possibly at the expense of the minority, which may be considered discriminatory. To meet the additional needs of the minority, that is, to support the difference, may be at a cost to the majority (Cigman, 2007; Low, 2007; Lunt, 2007; Wedell, 2008). This is referred to as the 'dilemma of difference'. Since it occurs where there is a diverse range of abilities to accommodate, it can be argued that the inclusive ideology has created it (Norwich and Kelly, 2005).

The dilemma of difference is considered to revolve around three elements within education, namely whether: a difficulty constitutes SEN; the curriculum should be adapted to meet individual needs, and the location in which education should take place. In short, the dilemmas of identification, curriculum and location (Norwich, 2007; Norwich, 2008; Wedell, 2008). Debate is on-going in respect of each of these aspects, but there is agreement that

some means of balancing the tensions needs to be achieved (Norwich, 2007; Norwich and Kelly, 2005; Cigman, 2007). The idea that a fully inclusive system could accommodate such a diverse range of needs, and hence be a resolution to the dilemma is rejected by Norwich and Kelly (2005), who suggest that the concept of inclusion is too ambiguous to provide a resolution. The balancing process will inevitably require a negotiation between different perspectives and rights, such that neither side will be entirely satisfied (Norwich and Kelly, 2005). If inclusion is considered in terms of a spectrum, a balance would need to be found between the polar points of inclusion and segregation, with inclusive options involving some separate provision, and separate provision incorporating some inclusive aspects (Norwich, 2008). Norwich considers debate that focuses upon total inclusion or segregation to be oversimplified, referring to: "…the futile pursuit of ideological purity." (Norwich, 2008: 141).

The Salamanca Statement (UNESCO 1994), refers to the provision of an effective education for the majority of children. In achieving this aim, there will be a minority for whom education provision may not meet their needs (Lindsay, 2003). Dyson (2005) sees this as an issue of equity, not inclusion. Equity has been described as having two dimensions: fairness and inclusion (Field, Kuczera and Pont, 2008). The former requires that aspects of life such as socio-economic status and gender should not create a barrier to the achievement of educational potential. Inclusion demands a basic standard of education for everyone. It is suggested that the current education system perpetuates a system of inequality (Brook, 2008).

Sen's capability approach may be one means of achieving equity in education (Terzi, 2007). Sen suggests that equality should be viewed in terms of an individual's freedom to make choices about the way they live; their capability to achieve the things they want. The approach takes account of human diversity, acknowledging that some people will be in a better position than others to take advantage of those freedoms. Diversity is viewed in terms of individual characteristics, the lived context, and the ability to use the resources available to achieve a goal (Sen, 1999; Terzi, 2007). Using this framework to consider disability directs the focus initially to impairments, and to a decision about whether, in the particular environment, that impairment will become a barrier to action. If the environment is not disabling then the individual has the capability to act. However, if the environment is disabling, that is, it prevents a person from achieving what their non-impaired peers can achieve, then support is required, not to eliminate the impairment, but to overcome it in that situation. The capability approach therefore accommodates diversity, and identifies what is needed by an individual within a specific context, to function in the way that their peers function in that same context (Terzi, 2007). The focus is to provide each person with the support they need to have equal opportunity with others.

An alternative approach to addressing the dilemma of difference is that of distributive justice, which considers issues of supply and demand (Evans, 2007). Either resources can be allocated on the basis of equality, that is every recipient receives the same, or on the basis of perceived need. The latter taking account of: "…inequalities that pre-exist on the demand side…" (Evans, 2007:88). From the point of view of supply, resources are limited and allocated

in general terms to fund SEN. From the perspective of demand, there exists a diverse range of needs. Current legislation does not provide direction in this regard since it fails to identify specific groups for SEN funds (Audit Commission/HMI, 1992), provides a means for parents to obtain additional funding through statements, and requires LAs to provide for all a child's needs (Evans, 2007). A lack of clear guidance inevitably leads to substantial variation in the way funding is allocated for SEN across LAs (Ainscow *et al*, 1999; Farrell, 2001; Audit Commission/HMI, 1992).

It is recognised that: "…inequality of outcomes can be associated with inequality of opportunity…" (OECD, 2004:5). If English legislation was changed to consider special needs education in terms of equality of opportunity as opposed to equality of provision, then in this context a LA would be required to act fairly, reasonably and without discrimination, in providing a child with SEN opportunities equal to those of his peers (Evans, 2007). This approach facilitates a more equal distribution of rights, where resources are limited (Evans, 2007).

Returning to the dilemma of difference and issues of equity, the capability approach suggests that it is possible to recognise individual difference, whilst simultaneously treating people in an equal way (Terzi, 2007). The distributive justice approach reaches the same conclusion, and Gillinson and Green (2008, cited in Wedell, 2008) conclude that there should be a focus on treating everyone equally as opposed to treating everyone the same, thus ensuring that the quality of opportunities for each person would be the same. In the current

economic climate, policy that would limit LA responsibility to providing equal opportunities, as opposed to meeting all demands beyond that which might be deemed fair and appropriate in relation to others, seems favourable and would provide opportunities to improve the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of the education system.

Achieving equality of opportunity may be possible if the design of educational provision is considered in terms of the five dimensions of the 'flexible interacting continua of provision' (Norwich and Gray, 2007, cited in Norwich, 2008), as opposed to the continuum of provision that considers provision just in terms of placement. The five dimensions include: identifying children with disabilities and difficulties; participation in terms of curriculum and social participation; placement; curriculum focus and teaching strategies, and level of governance. There is a need to achieve a balance within and between these interlinked dimensions for individuals (Norwich, 2008). Thus, whilst provision may look different for each individual, the use of continua to attain a balance between the common and separate aspects of each dimension will support equality of opportunity for all.

2.3.2 Funding

Resources and finance are identified amongst a number of possible barriers to inclusion (MacBeath, Galton, Steward, MacBeath and Page, 2006; Ainscow *et al*, 1999; Croll and Moses, 2000).

A study by Crowther *et al* (1998) broke down the costs of educating children with MLD by location and provision. Special school costs were higher than mainstream costs for pupils of similar types, although thirty seven percent of that difference was accounted for by transport costs. Staff costs accounted for two thirds of the costs for pupils with MLD. The group size and amount of adult support impacted substantially on this cost. In MLD schools where adult-to-pupil-ratios are more favourable, the costs of head teachers and senior management had a significant effect on pupil costs, as did TAs where they formed an important part of the provision.

The Audit Commission (2009) identified the need for schools to give greater consideration to the effective deployment of staff, and to the need for economy and cost-effectiveness in spending in order to achieve value for money. This requires greater availability and use of data relating to costs and outcomes, and the assessment of the financial implications of their planning. Despite the proportion of budgets spent on workforce costs, few school plans included this element. It is suggested that: "…the deployment of classroom staff is the most important financial decision in a school…" and that consideration must be given to the allocation of staff according to priorities and achieving best effect (Audit Commission, 2009: 50; Ofsted, 2004). With the increased numbers of support staff, schools can be more flexible in their deployment, however, it has been found that there is no consistency in the allocation of classroom staff across schools, even in those recognised as high performing schools (Audit Commission, 2009). It is suggested that the use of TAs to support children

with SEN can be a response to scarce resources and lack of funding for qualified teachers (MacBeath, *et al*, 2006).

Issues of equity as well as cost-effectiveness came to the fore when costs were compared across MLD and non-MLD pupils and special and mainstream schools. For example, in a mainstream primary school a child with MLD received sixty six percent more funding than a non-MLD peer. However, the amount the child with MLD received was half of the amount received for a child with MLD in a special school. In this scenario, equity becomes an issue not just between MLD and non-MLD pupils, but also between MLD pupils in different locations. It suggests that resources are not allocated according to individual needs, rather resources available to pupils with MLD relate to the amount of resource available to the school (Crowther *et al*, 1998). This implies an inequitable situation.

Within the current system Crowther *et al* (1998) identified three means by which SEN funding was allocated in schools: an ecological method that uses funding for the benefit of all pupils, but makes it difficult to identify benefit for specific pupils; a structural model that directs funding to certain groups but has no benefit for other pupils and does not meet any individual needs; a backpack model that sees funding used for the children it is allocated for, has no benefits for other pupils, and may lead to pupils being separated from their peers. Using allocated funding for the benefit of all pupils is contentious, since parents of children with statements believe the associated funding is being used for the benefit of their child (Lauchlan and Boyle, 2007). A possible means of

allocating funding is to align a continuum of funding, or provision, with the continuum of needs (Ainscow *et al*, 1999; Daniels and Porter, 2007; UNESCO, 1994), or to consider the 'flexible interacting continua of provision' discussed previously (Norwich and Gray, 2007, cited in Norwich, 2008). These would direct funding in a manner that supported equality of opportunity.

In mainstream schools inclusion can be supported or inhibited by the way funds are allocated (Ainscow *et al*, 1999). Numbers of statements issued are rising as schools and parents use this method to obtain additional funding, as opposed to using them as an opportunity to review school organisation and provision in order to meet a spectrum of needs (Lunt, 2007). An issue with funding through statements is that if a child improves to the point that a statement is no longer required, the funding will be removed (MacBeath, *et al*, 2006; Marks, 2000). It is suggested that using statements as an opportunity to review practice, would have benefits in terms of reducing reliance on statements, and ending the practice of failing to move children on in order to retain funding for them (Ainscow *et al*, 1999). Education establishments make on-going claims that there is insufficient funding to meet pupil needs, however the Audit Commission (2009) identified that forty per cent of schools have excess balances. If these were released, £530 million would become available. As stated: "…hoarding money intended for education is poor value for money…" (Audit Commission, 2009: 5).

Evidence does not indicate the superiority of any one type of provision (Crowther *et al*, 1998; Lindsay 2003; Wedell, 2008; Norwich, 2008). Certainly

the evidence in favour of inclusion is not sufficient to warrant the claims of the Salamanca Statement (Lindsay, 2003: Lindsay 2006). Research indicates that there is no evidence that keeping children in mainstream education has a significant impact on levels of attainment. However, there is no evidence to suggest that LAs should not continue to pursue a policy of inclusion (Dyson *et al*, 2004). Evidence does suggest that there are factors that influence attainment to a greater degree than inclusivity, such as socio-economic status, gender and ethnicity (Dyson *et al*, 2004). Whilst socio-economic background explains some of the disparities in education, however, quality of schools and average levels of students has greater significance (OECD, 2004).

Parents need to feel confident that the school they choose can effectively educate their child (Elkins *et al*, 2003). Whilst special provision is considered to be an option for the minority of children with the most severe and complex needs (DfES, 2004; Dyson, 2005; Norwich, 2008), there is a view that parents of children with statements, choose special provision over mainstream because of the limitations they see in mainstream provision (Lindsay, 2003; Low, 2007). However, Elkins *et al* (2003) demonstrated a prevalence of parents in favour of inclusion, possibly reflecting the general view in favour of inclusion within society. It should be noted however, that the parents within this study were in favour of inclusion when their children were well supported. In terms of pupils' choice of school, Norwich and Kelly (2004) found that whilst in general children with MLD tended to prefer their present school, secondary aged pupils in special schools demonstrated a tendency to prefer a mainstream setting.

Ofsted (2006) found that resourced SEN provision, or units in mainstream schools produced better outcomes without having any adverse effect on other pupils. Resourced schools also demonstrated higher expectations for children with SEN (Ofsted, 2006). Mills, Cole, Jenkins, and Dale, (1998, cited in Lindsay, 2003), and Marston (1996, cited in Lindsay, 2003), found evidence in favour of combined or integrated provision.

Croll and Moses (2000) demonstrated that children with MLD were considered to be a group that should be accommodated in mainstream schools. Those children found to be most difficult to accommodate in mainstream were those with complex needs and those with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD). It has been suggested that the latter could inhibit progress towards inclusion (Ainscow *et al*,1999), and teachers' unions have articulated their concern regarding the further inclusion of children with EBD in mainstream classes (Farrell, 2001). It is estimated that teachers spend between ten and fifty per cent more time with pupils with EBD than with other pupils (MacBeath *et al*, 2006).

Special school head teachers indicated that the reason that some children could not be accommodated in mainstream was due to failures in the mainstream or in education policy (Croll and Moses, 2000). Special school leaders (Attfield and Williams, 2003) observed that for pupils with SEN to be successfully included in mainstream settings, learning processes, individual learning opportunities and the curriculum needed to be addressed.

Research involving cross national policy-makers and teachers indicated that reasons for maintaining special provision included the need to provide an education for children with complex difficulties, including EBD; the need for specialist provision to be available for pupils and mainstream settings through outreach support; parental demand for special provision, and the economic benefits of having resources in one location (Norwich, 2008). Research has shown that some special schools have encouraged parents to see them as the safe option (Ainscow *et al*, 1999). This is corroborated by research that demonstrated the tensions between the ideal of inclusion and practical action, where special school staff articulated their support for inclusion but then acted to make the school so good that parents were opposed its closure (Croll and Moses, 2000). Evidence suggests that there is an approach to SEN that focuses upon care of the individual, in which special schools are considered to be the most appropriate environment for some children, offering a safe and protective environment. Whilst practitioners recognise the human rights argument for mainstream provision, they place the right to the best environment for the child at the centre of their decision making (Croll and Moses, 2000). This demonstrates the barriers to inclusion that exist within the system. Such evidence does provide some explanation of the view that parents may have of mainstream provision not yet being of sufficient quality for them to choose it for their children (Low, 2007).

2.3.3 Effective schools

Achieving an inclusive environment requires a review of whole school processes and practices. This includes the culture, structure and organisation of the school as well as the practical matters of classroom management, pedagogy and differentiation of the curriculum (Low, 2007; Ainscow *et al*, 1999). These elements together with continuing professional development (CPD) and the provision of specialist staff are included in the characteristics of an effective school (Ofsted, 2006; Daniels and Porter, 2007; DES, 1978). Kugelmass and Ainscow (2004: 140) identified that central to inclusive educational practice is: "…an uncompromising commitment to principles of inclusion…" amongst leaders and staff. Their research also identified three aspects to the concept of culture that impact upon inclusion, namely; staff values and attitudes in terms of the acceptance of diversity and the provision of equal opportunities to all pupils; the willingness of staff to collaborate across specialisms to provide a fluid service for pupils with SEN, and the willingness of leaders to create collaborative environments that facilitate joint decision making and the enabling and support of staff. Skidmore (2004, cited in Sheehy *et al,* 2009) observed that an IE setting approached planning from the point of view of the curriculum and subject to be learned, then deciding how to make this accessible to all, as opposed to a deficit approach which commenced with the individual pupils' needs and difficulties.

2.3.4 Effective pedagogy

In a review of research conducted by Sheehy *et al* (2009), effective classroom practice was considered in terms of learning, behaviour, and community participation. Effectiveness of provision in mainstream settings has been found to be dependent upon the quality and availability of support (Farrell, 2001; Lewis and Norwich, 2001; Blatchford, Hallam, Ireson, Kutnick and Creech, 2008; Brook, 2008), high expectations, whole school planning, rigorous evaluation (Ofsted, 2004), and the way in which the system provides for children's needs, and works in collaboration with other services (OECD, 2007). In terms of equity of provision, additional resources and the quality of teaching are of significance (OECD, 2004). It is these elements that are considered to provide the learning environment that will enable a pupil to perform equally to pupils of similar ability (OECD, 2004).

2.3.4.1 Streaming

Evidence suggests that there is a tendency for the quality of teaching to be different for children in low ability and high ability classes (Blatchford, *et al*, 2008). In high ability primary groups, there is an expectation that children will work more quickly, complete more difficult tasks and benefit from enhanced opportunities. In contrast, pupils in low ability groups have topics omitted from their curriculum, and expectations are lower (Blatchford, *et al*, 2008). There is evidence that streaming pupils by ability emphasises differences in attainment

and can lead to teasing of both low and high ability pupils and the stigmatisation of low ability pupils (Blatchford *et al*, 2008).

In terms of the social implications of streaming, evidence suggests social groups amongst primary pupils do not necessarily reflect school groupings, with pupils preferring to mix with children of similar social class, ability and ethnicity (Blatchford *et al*, 2008). It had been thought that mixed ability groups facilitated peer support, however research does not provide evidence that the presence of higher ability pupils is beneficial to pupils of lower ability (Peverett, 1994, cited in Blatchford *et al*, 2008).

There is limited evidence, with regards to the benefits of streaming children according to ability, on levels of attainment (Duckworth *et al*, 2009; Blatchford *et al*, 2008). In relation to low achieving children, placement in a group of low achievers can have a negative impact on attitudes and motivation (Duckworth *et al*, 2009), whilst placement in a mixed ability group with high achievers results in pupils making more progress (Duckworth *et al*, 2009; Blatchford *et al*, 2008). This evidence suggests that the practice of streaming children by ability will lead to widening gaps between high and low achievers, as those of low ability fall behind and high ability children progress (Duckworth *et al*, 2009).

2.3.4.2 Class size

There is little evidence to suggest that reducing class size or increasing the resources available has an impact on levels of attainment (Duckworth *et al*,

2009; Blatchford *et al*, 2008; Brook, 2008). It is possible that this may be because teachers faced with smaller classes continue to utilise the same pedagogical approaches (Blatchford *et al*, 2008). Even where increased resource per capita is accompanied by an increase in achievement, no causal link has been identified between the two phenomena. Evidence suggests that it is the way that resources are used that is of importance (Duckworth *et al*, 2009). In primary schools, large classes tend to mean larger groups within the class, and as a consequence the quality of teaching is less, and the quality of pupils' concentration and work is lower. In smaller classes, teachers are more likely to spend time with individuals, facilitating the identification of problems in learning and addressing them in more flexible ways (Blatchford *et al*, 2008).

With regard to pupil participation, large classes provide an environment in which pupils can listen and become one of the crowd, as opposed to small classes where teachers can engage pupils in more active learning (Blatchford *et al*, 2008). However, there is a lack of conclusive evidence linking small class size with increased achievement. Despite this, parents still demand smaller classes (Brook, 2008).

2.3.4.3 Effective teachers

Effective Year 2 teachers have been identified as those who spent prolonged periods of time with pupils with SEN, and during that interaction encouraged pupils to problem solve, discuss and describe their ideas, and link that with their own experiences and existing understanding; the latter was found to be

important to the learning process (Rix, Hall, Nind, Sheehy and Wearmouth, 2009; Sheehy *et al*, 2009). Throughout this process teachers were seen to follow the pupil's lead with their questioning (Rix *et al*, 2009). Effective Year 3 teachers form part of a teacher community, incorporating professionals in and external to the school, within which there is a shared view of: how children learn; the characteristics, skills and knowledge to be learned; shared aims in terms of academic and social skills, and the importance of social interaction in the learning process and as a means of including children with SEN. Learning activities allowed for a diverse range of student learning styles incorporating visual, verbal and kinaesthetic approaches (Rix *et al*, 2009; Sheehy *et al*, 2009). Teachers' skills and knowledge of the learning process facilitated their understanding of the pupils' needs and enabled them to support the pupils' development in small stages (Rix *et al*, 2009).

Ofsted (2006) demonstrated that pupils perform better academically, when supported by specialist teachers who have a greater knowledge with regards to assessing and planning for children with complex needs, and increased confidence in adapting the curriculum, managing the provision and encouraging independence. These teachers were found to be willing to take risks to make lessons innovative and exciting for pupils, and were able to involve children in the curriculum by considering their teaching strategies, the use of appropriate resources and the focused use of support.

Effective teachers understand child development and learning in addition to subject matter (Wedell, 2005, 2008; Sheehy *et al*, 2009). It is possible that as

an inclusive system develops, teachers will be required to facilitate pupils' learning as opposed to simply transferring curriculum knowledge (Wedell, 2005). Teacher training to support children with SEN was a requirement of the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994). Ofsted (2006) demonstrated the positive impact that well trained staff could have on pupil attainment, however, research conducted by MacBeath *et al* (2006) indicates that training is not always appropriate to meet needs and does not take place due to difficulties with providing staff cover. Special school leaders suggested that for mainstream staff to increase in confidence and skills, their training and development must encompass a wider scope than course attendance alone (Attfield and Williams, 2003). Ofsted (2006) identified effective schools where training does occur and is effectively disseminated, however, there is still evidence that subsequent evaluation of that training is lacking.

Teaching children with SEN separately to teaching all children is described as unhelpful, and it is suggested that the focus should be on teaching all children effectively (Davis and Florian, 2004, cited in Wedell, 2005). Lewis and Norwich (2001) observed that there is little evidence to suggest a need to use particular teaching approaches with different types of SEN, however, they do advocate the concept of a teaching continua; common teaching strategies and approaches used to greater or lesser degrees depending upon individual pupils' needs. A sign of quality and flexibility in mainstream teaching is the ability to expand the range of these common approaches to meet the needs of children with SEN, and recognising when that needs to include additional support within or outside the classroom, or specialist support beyond that

which is possible in a mainstream classroom. Such a continua would, it is suggested, provide a means for distinguishing between normal variations in teaching and the additional adaptation needed for pupils with SEN (Lewis and Norwich, 2001). In contrast, Sheehy *et al* (2009) conclude that, in teaching children with SEN, generic teaching approaches fail to take account of subject specific issues. They (Sheehy *et al*, 2009) contend that social engagement is an important means of promoting academic and social inclusion, and that teachers should develop subject specific pedagogies that utilise social interaction to enhance learning.

Norwich and Kelly (2004) indicated that children in mainstream and special settings perceived English/literacy to be the hardest subject area to learn, followed by mathematics/numeracy. In each case a greater percentage indicated difficulties learning these subjects in the mainstream than in special school.

2.3.4.4 Withdrawal sessions

The ideology of inclusion and a focus on enabling all pupils to access the NC, has created a desire to support all children in mainstream classes all of the time. Marks (2000) suggested that because of this pupils who would benefit from withdrawal sessions are not receiving such support. Wedell stated that: "…flexibility of pupil grouping to match learner needs and the demands of the curriculum is clearly at the heart of progress towards inclusion." (Wedell, 2005: 8). If considered in terms of flexible grouping rather than as a form of

segregation, withdrawal sessions can serve a purpose, although it could also be argued that inappropriate differentiation of classroom activities, or poor grouping of pupils may be the reason that withdrawal sessions are necessary (Wedell, 2005). Norwich (2008) demonstrated that for some policy-makers and teachers the dilemma of difference in respect of location was partially resolved, by balancing mainstream classes with withdrawal sessions. Even the CSIE accepts that withdrawal sessions for limited amounts of time and for a particular purpose should not be considered as segregation (Norwich, 2008). However, evidence indicates that the majority of the activities completed during withdrawal sessions are either unrelated to, or highly differentiated from, the curriculum work in the classroom. This can cause pupils difficulties in terms of moving in and out of the flow of curriculum work completed by other pupils in their class (Blatchford, Bassett, Brown, Koutsoubou, Martin, Russell, Webster and Rubie-Davies, 2009).

Norwich and Kelly (2004) indicated that a majority of pupils were used to receiving support in the form of withdrawal sessions (eighty four per cent), in-class support (eighty six per cent), group work (sixty six per cent) and individually (fifty nine per cent), as opposed to support in specific subject areas (eight per cent). Pupils in secondary settings reported mostly withdrawal and group support, whilst support for primary aged children took the form of in-class support and TAs supporting at tables. When asked about preferences for types of support, forty per cent of pupils indicated a preference for withdrawal sessions, thirty three per cent preferred in-class support and thirty per cent had a preference for a mix of the two approaches. It was evident that

primary aged boys were happier with withdrawal and in-class support than secondary aged boys. Those who preferred withdrawal sessions provided a number of reasons for their preference which included receiving better quality support (forty seven per cent) in a quieter environment with more appropriate work (twenty nine per cent). Twenty four per cent enjoyed the fun of these withdrawal sessions and twenty per cent felt that they received more attention this way (Norwich and Kelly, 2004). Vaughan and Klinger (1998, cited in Lindsay, 2003) also identified a preference amongst pupils for withdrawal sessions and for similar reasons to those listed above. In contrast, the smaller number who did not favour withdrawal suggested that it was boring without their friends (fourteen per cent) (Norwich and Kelly, 2004). There is evidence to suggest that to be most effective, individual support for pupils should be combined with supported group work in the classroom, to encourage the participation of all pupils (Alborz, Pearson, Farrell and Howes, 2009).

2.3.5 The SENCO

An example of the expansion in special needs education is the introduction of the role of the SENCO (Crowther, Dyson and Millward, 2001). The role is dominated by the need to balance administrative tasks with time to support teaching staff (MacBeath, *et al*, 2006; Daniels and Porter, 2007). Crowther *et al* (2001) identified that primary SENCOs felt they had insufficient time in which to fulfil their role. It was suggested that a gap existed between the strategic role envisaged for the SENCO and the more practical role that they actually fulfilled. Crowther *et al* (2001) contend that this gap is due to dilemmas at the

heart of special education in the form of: competing demands of inclusion and the standards agenda; a lack of definition of special education causing conflict between individuals; special education consisting of human, material and ideological elements that change constantly. Regulation has failed to bring stability to any of these aspects, and hence it is impossible for SENCOs to reconcile their actual role with that anticipated by policymakers.

Crowther *et al* (2001) reported that seventy two per cent of SENCOs indicated that occasional training events were the only training they received, and just thirteen per cent held certificates in SEN. This picture was reiterated in 2006 when research showed that a minority of SENCOs held SEN qualifications (MacBeath, *et al*, 2006).

2.3.6 Teaching Assistants

Evidence indicates that, following implementation of: 'Raising standards and tackling workloads: a national agreement' (DfES, 2003), classroom based support staff spend much of their time in a direct teaching role in the classroom (Blatchford *et al*, 2009). Joint working between teachers and TAs is a common response to meeting the wide range of needs in the classroom (Daniels and Porter, 2007).

The role of the TA is seen by some as key in supporting children with SEN, whilst others question whether this is a form of segregation within the classroom (Ainscow *et al*, 1999; Wedell, 2005). There is concern about

whether developing the skills of TAs subsequently de-skills teachers (Ainscow *et al*, 1999). However, teachers report a number of benefits of having support staff in the classroom, for example: enhanced job satisfaction due to the positive impact of support staff on pupil outcomes; increased quantity and enhanced quality of teaching; a reduction in workload; they focus on particular individuals thus facilitating greater individualisation and differentiation; enabling the teacher to focus on teaching and spend more time with the other pupils (Blatchford *et al*, 2009). TA support has also been found to facilitate teachers in carrying out more creative and practical activities, in providing opportunities for teachers to work with individual pupils or groups, and reducing teachers' feelings of stress (Alborz *et al*, 2009).

It is suggested that teachers would be better utilised supporting pupils with SEN, whilst TAs support the remaining pupils as instructed by teachers, so that staff skills are utilised effectively (Wedell, 2005). Evidence indicated that with the increased presence of classroom-based support staff, some teachers spent less time with lower ability pupils, who were supported by TAs individually or in small groups. This suggested that support staff were providing alternative and not additional support for pupils (Blatchford *et al*, 2009).

Blatchford *et al* (2009) showed that TAs could be less formal in their interactions with pupils and less academically demanding and learning focused than teachers. They may also lack the teacher's ability to break a task down to facilitate understanding, opting to continue with the task regardless of

understanding. Where teachers would scaffold pupils' learning, TAs were inclined to provide the answers, thus encouraging dependency.

Ofsted (2006) found that where TAs were providing good quality support, they had received high quality training and also held relevant qualifications. This is supported by evidence (Alborz, *et al*, 2009) suggesting that well trained and supported TAs have been found to have a positive influence on the learning of individuals and small groups of pupils in specifically defined areas of work, in addition to supporting children's social interactions, and encouraging independent action. Ofsted (2006) warned, however, that a good TA should not be considered to be a substitute for the support of a trained teacher.

Blatchford *et al* (2009) reported that classroom based support staff appeared to facilitate more individual teaching and less whole class teaching, and have a positive effect on pupil behaviour. These benefits were evident for pupils in primary classes where support staff interacted with whole groups. In secondary classes, pupils with SEN received more individual attention from support staff, who were identified as having a positive effect on pupil behaviour, in terms of engagement and attention.

TAs who lack expertise, support children with the greatest need, and often differentiate the curriculum to make it appropriate for a pupil's ability (MacBeath, *et al*, 2006; Ainscow *et al*, 1999). Teachers have a perception of TAs' level of subject knowledge and direct them to support pupils according to that perception. Hence a TA with a lesser subject knowledge will be utilised

supporting lower ability pupils, where a more basic subject knowledge is considered acceptable. It is possible that a greater subject knowledge provides TAs with a level of confidence that enhances the support they are able to provide to pupils (Blatchford *et al*, 2009). It could be argued that supporting pupils with SEN requires greater understanding of how children learn and appropriate pedagogy, in addition to subject knowledge, than that required for teaching children without SEN (Wedell, 2005; Blatchford *et al*, 2009; Sheehy *et al,* 2009).

The introduction of more TAs in the classroom has created a need for teachers to become managers. Issues for teachers in working with TAs have been identified as a lack of time to consult and plan (MacBeath *et al*, 2006; Blatchford *et al*, 2009), despite research highlighting the importance of this (Alborz *et al,* 2009; Sheehy *et al,* 2009). Teachers may lack the knowledge and skills to support TAs (MacBeath *et al*, 2006; Daniels and Porter, 2007; Blatchford *et al*, 2009). Hence, whilst classroom workload may reduce, management duties increase (Alborz *et al*, 2009; Blatchford *et al*, 2009). Teachers need training to make collaboration with TAs work effectively (Alborz *et al*, 2009; Blatchford *et al*, 2009).

Blatchford *et al* (2009) concluded that whilst support staff have an important role to play in classroom practice, issues have arisen from the expectation that more staff will mean better outcomes for pupils. In relation to academic outcomes for English, mathematics and science, evidence indicated that the more support pupils received, the less progress they made. Whilst there were

benefits for teachers and teaching, the benefits in terms of academic progress for supported pupils had not materialised. Blatchford *et al* (2009) suggested that for support staff to be effectively deployed there needs to be a clear understanding of their role and their desired impact in terms of pupil outcomes.

2.4 Conclusion

Wedell (2005; 2008) suggested that current policy is focused upon meeting pupils' needs and increasing flexibility within a system that cannot accommodate it, although recent policy initiatives have sought to provide education and other statutory services with greater scope and hence potential for flexibility. Wedell (2008: 128) suggests that the education system continues to need greater flexibility, and that where there is success in inclusion, this is achieved: "…despite the system, rather than because of it…". He suggests that a change is needed to a system that recognises the diverse range of learning needs of all pupils. A continuum of provision should be offered for all pupils, moving away from the current system that singles out pupils with SEN for different treatment, separating them from the mainstream agenda (Wedell, 2008).

Bowe *et al* (1992:12) state that the policy process: "…emerges from and continually interacts with a variety of interrelated contexts." To be adaptable to local conditions, policy must be flexible (Duckworth *et al*, 2009), however, policy that facilitates such flexibility is open to numerous interpretations by a variety of end users, in different contexts (Bowe *et al*, 1992). If policy

intentions are ambiguous, contain contradictions or omissions, or are particularly complex, it is possible for interested parties to place upon them their own interpretations, which may lead to unintended outcomes (Bowe *et al*, 1992; Duckworth *et al*, 2009). As discussed, policy relating to SEN tends to be ambiguous in terms of definitions and practice and in some instances its implementation creates barriers against the very thing it is meant to facilitate, inclusion.

Children's right to mainstream education and parents' right to choice have been strengthened through legislation. However, access to mainstream schools is still weighted against children with SEN, and the bureaucratic process of school selection tends to favour articulate, middle class parents, who are able to become advocates for their children. The Government has tried to redress the power held by LAs, by providing parents with legal remedies. Whilst children with MLD are identified as the group that could be educated in mainstream schools, in practice parents have been identified as selecting special schools as opposed to mainstream because they see limitations in provision. There is a tendency by parents to revert to statements to protect what they see as their child's right to support.

The combination of raising standards in schools and providing parents with choice of provision, have proved detrimental for children with SEN. Schools with good standing in the league tables become popular with parents. To remain popular with parents, schools need good results; children with SEN impact negatively upon results. It has proved necessary to introduce further

legislation, to try to even the playing field in terms of access to mainstream schools, but some (HC, 2006) do not think that this has yet been achieved.

It was anticipated that the term SEN would move thinking away from medical categorisation, towards viewing needs in terms of a spectrum. In the event, the lack of definition of the term SEN and the requirement for data recording, has led to the continued use of categories. The lack of clarity regarding trigger points on the spectrum of needs, has led to the inconsistent allocation of levels and types of provision, creating inequality of opportunity in the system, both within and across LAs.

The ideology of inclusion implies an education system where all children learn together. However, this ideal is reliant upon mainstream schools being sufficiently resourced to provide for all children. Parents, it seems, do not believe mainstream schools are able to provide for all children, since they still choose special provision. Policy has led to a change in the populations within mainstream and special settings, however, the Government has not yet achieved an inclusive mainstream system. Government policy describes an IE system that incorporates special provision, as opposed to an education system consisting of inclusive mainstream settings (Norwich, 2008).

Changing characteristics within school populations call for different skills and knowledge from teachers. This requires formal training and the support of an experienced outreach service. This service is provided by special school staff, raising questions regarding the quality of the on-going provision for children in

special schools, who, as stated, are now those with the most severe and complex needs. To provide effective, inclusive mainstream provision, the training of teaching and support staff, and their effective deployment within mainstream schools requires attention.

Funding is a major issue in the education of children with SEN. The process involved in moving funding from Government to school incorporates several layers of decision making, through which the original focus of the funding can become diluted. LAs are reluctant to delegate full control of funding to schools; schools in their turn, lack accountability for their spending. There is a lack of data that identifies effective provision, or that details costs of different provision. This, combined with the perception that achieving value for money is a low priority, suggests that spending fails to be focused in a cost-effective, cost-efficient or economic manner. This lack of focus in spending extends to the deployment of staff, who, evidence suggests, could be deployed more effectively in terms of both pupil outcomes and cost-effectiveness. As with other aspects of SEN policy, lack of clarity leads to inconsistency across and within LAs, and hence inequality of provision.

There is a need to achieve equity of provision not only between children with and without SEN, but also between children with SEN, for whom provision currently varies. Finding the means by which to provide equal opportunities for all children within the existing system is an on-going dilemma.

It is suggested (Duckworth *et al*, 2009; Brook, 2008) that policy changes very quickly whilst the effects of policy take time to emerge. The pace of change, and multiplicity and overlap of policies and target audiences, make it difficult to produce robust evidence to identify those aspects of policy that have a direct influence on practice, and on pupil attainment (Duckworth *et al*, 2009). Evidence suggests that inclusive policy is required to be short and central to other initiatives, shaped by best practice whilst also informing best practice (Ainscow *et al*, 1999), giving it the cyclical nature described by Bowe *et al* (1992).

The Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) articulated the ideal of a world in which the education system becomes a role model of inclusivity for society; an education system that encompasses human diversity in all its forms. The statement directed Governments to: "…give the highest policy and budgetary priority to improve their education systems to enable them to include all children regardless of individual differences or difficulties,…" (UNESCO, 1994:ix). However, seventeen years later this is still an ideal. The road towards it is fraught with disagreement and confusion for all concerned.

Having considered the context of SEN through literature, the following chapter discusses the research design, the framework provided by the Bowe *et al* (1992) model of the policy cycle; the interpretive approach taken and the data collection methods selected.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

It has been demonstrated that there are international and national influences on local SEN practice. The use of the Bowe *et al* policy cycle (1992) as a framework for the examination of current literature, demonstrated that this supposedly top-down model of policy implementation is by no means straightforward, and that other factors, such as individual knowledge and experience can influence practical implementation, hence the intended outcomes may not materialise.

Within this context of policy intention and practice, the following research questions will be examined:

1. What is the policy-to-practice context for inclusion of pupils with MLD?
2. How do schools (head teachers, teachers and support staff) implement the policy regarding the inclusion of pupils with MLD?
3. What are the experiences of teachers and pupils with MLD in special and inclusive settings?
4. What are the views of the variety of stakeholders tasked with implementation of inclusion policy as practised at the school level?
5. What are the views of MLD pupils of inclusion policy as experienced by them?

This chapter describes and justifies the choice of research design and the individual methods of data collection selected to address these questions. In addition, issues of reliability, validity, trustworthiness and ethics are considered.

3.1 Research Design

3.1.1 Framework of the continuous policy process (Bowe *et al*, 1992)

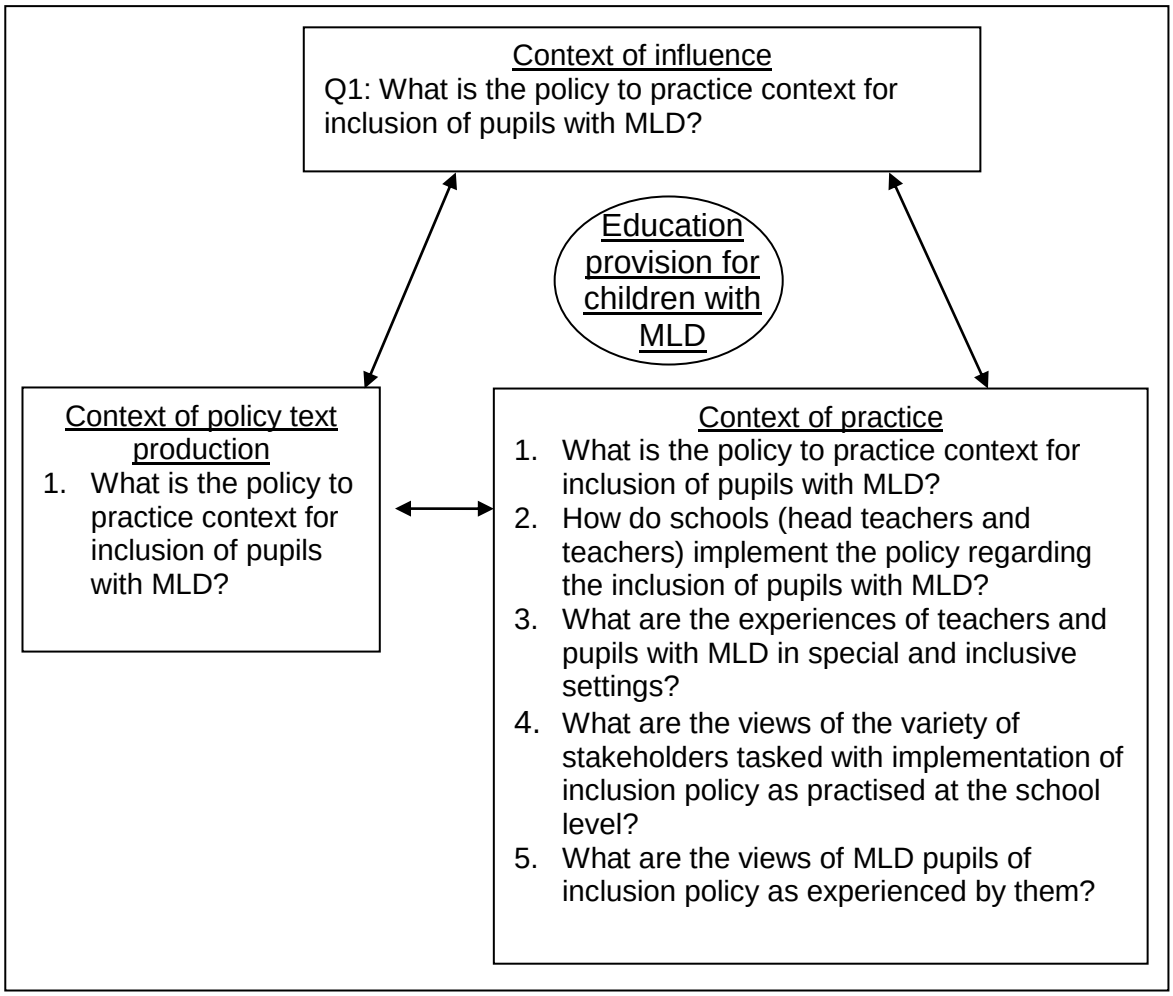
There are three approaches that could be taken to analysing the policy-to-practice context of the education provision for MLD. The top-down approach to researching policy implementation requires the process to commence with a government policy decision. It then considers to what extent those tasked with implementing the policy stayed true to its objectives, to what extent the policy achieved its aim and what factors affected its implementation. The second approach to the research is a bottom-up approach, which requires that the research starts at the point of the enactors of policy and works up through the network of those involved in the policy area until the policy-makers are reached. The former approach is criticised because it assumes that the policy-makers are the key actors in the process and leads to the neglect of those involved at the stage of enactment. The converse is true in the case of the latter: it is criticised for the possibility that it neglects the policy-makers at the centre and their influence over implementation (Sabatier, 1986).

In order to explore the policy-to-practice context of education provision for children with MLD, it was essential to adopt an analytic framework that would ensure all aspects of the study area were incorporated. The model of the continuous policy process developed by Bowe *et al* (1992), encouraged the examination of policy and practice at strategic and local levels, and additionally allowed for possible interaction between the levels. It appeared to be the analytic framework most capable of identifying the complete context within which special needs education occurs, and sufficiently robust to manage the complexity of that context.

The Bowe *et al* (1992) model was therefore adopted as the framework for this study, ensuring that the phenomenon, that is, education provision for children with MLD, was studied from three perspectives: the contexts of influence, policy text production and practice.

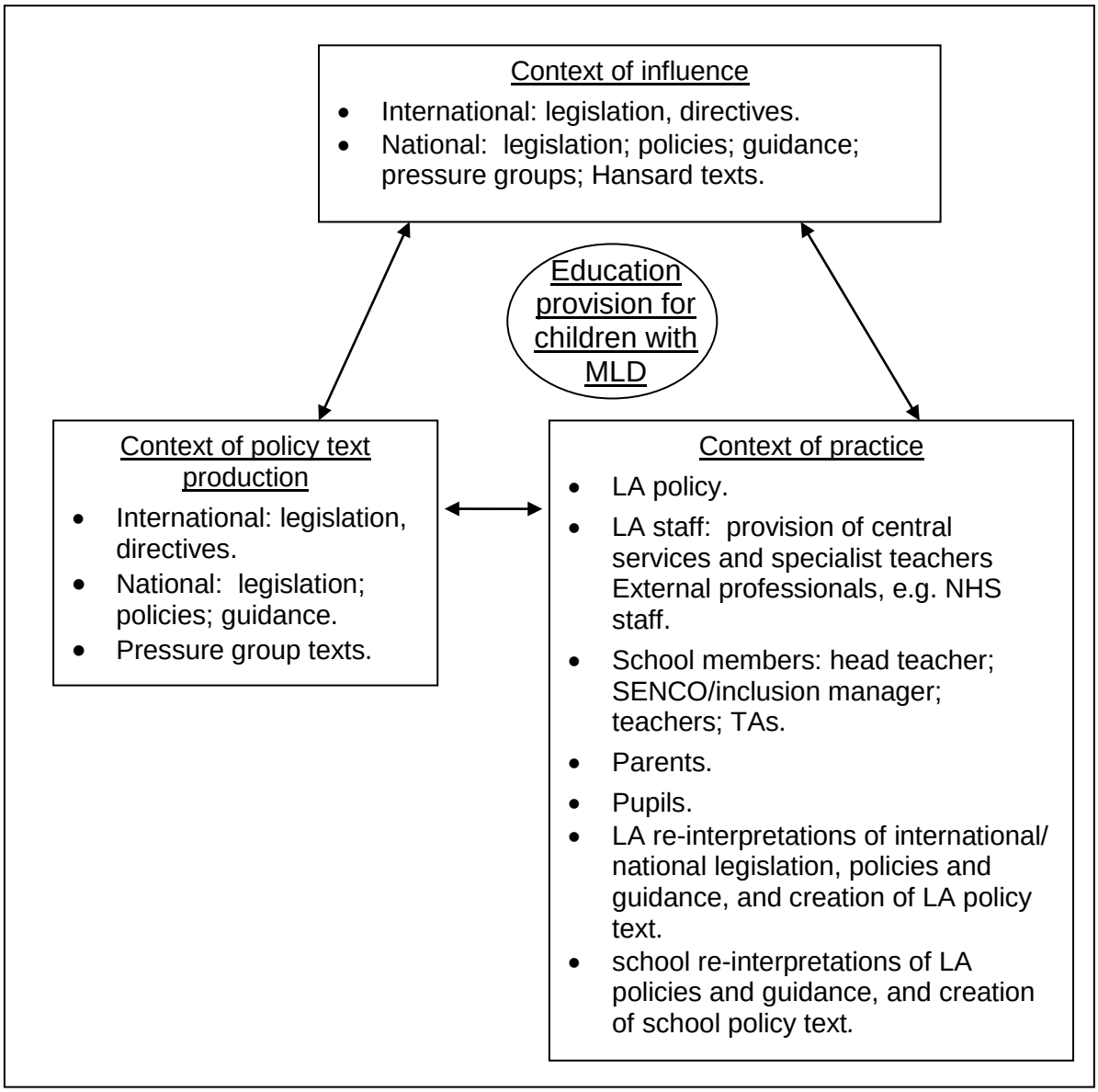
Initially, the research questions were assigned to the area(s) of context within which they could be addressed (figure 3.1). The inclusion of question 1 in all three areas of context, demonstrated that the different contexts are not insular; each interacts and overlaps with the others creating its cyclical nature.

Figure 3.1: 'Contexts of policy making' (Bowe *et al*, 1992: 20), as a framework for placing the research questions in their appropriate location.



Having located the research questions within the Bowe *et al* model (1992), it was necessary to consider what sources of data were available within those areas of context to address the questions (figure 3.2). The organisation of data sources within the model, demonstrates again that boundaries overlapped between the practice of educating children with MLD in schools and the external influences that impacted on that practice.

Figure 3.2: 'Contexts of policy making' (Bowe *et al*, 1992: 20), adapted to show data sources.



Having identified the research questions and potential sources of data within the framework of the policy cycle, the research approach will be discussed.

3.1.2 Research paradigms

Research in education has traditionally been dominated by a scientific approach which seeks objectivity, measurability and controllability. It is a deductive method, meaning that the research is focused on an hypothesis or theory to be tested. When conducting research within this positivist paradigm, social scientists observe and interpret the social world as they do the natural world, focusing upon aspects that can be measured through observation and experimentation. The predominantly quantitative methods of data collection used, facilitate replication and hence the creation of generalisable laws and rules of behaviour (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000; Gray, 2004; Robson, 2002).

It is suggested by Cohen *et al* (2000) that this approach does not take account of the chaotic nature of human behaviour, which contrasts with the order and predictability of the natural world. It supports a determinist view of the way in which humans respond to their environment, that is, they are passive and can be controlled.

An alternative research approach, an interpretive approach, supposes that people create and modify their own meaning of phenomena and it is, therefore, possible to have different understandings of the same experience (Gray, 2004). This approach suggests that social reality and natural reality are different, and views people as autonomous beings, initiating as well as responding to events. To understand the social world, researchers need to

understand the individual views of those involved within a specific context, and employ predominantly qualitative methods to achieve this. For instance, an ethnographic approach, can be taken which requires the researcher to experience the phenomena first hand. Alternatively participants' interpretations of social reality can be sought, and brought together to form an understanding of the phenomena: to construct theories or models. This inductive approach contrasts with the deductive method of the positivist paradigm (Cohen *et al*, 2000; Gray, 2004).

The use of an inductive research approach and qualitative methods of data collection, enables rich data to be gathered from different sources that give meaning to a phenomenon, and opens up the possibility of discovering matters beyond the original scope of the research questions. However, the move away from scientific, objective methods of data collection, renders the data less reliable and therefore less useful in generalising to a wider context. Interpretive research is also accused of failing to take account of the wider social context, hence reducing its reliability. Additionally, participants are only able to provide data about the aspect of the study with which they are concerned, leaving the researcher to bring these different aspects together (Cohen *et al*, 2000).

A study that combines quantitative and qualitative approaches benefits from the strengths of each, for example, a quantitative survey can frame and give greater focus to a later qualitative study (Aubrey, David, Godfrey and Thompson, 2000; Robson, 2002). Combining methods also enhances the

opportunities for methodological triangulation thus enhancing the validity and reliability of the research (Robson, 2002).

The interpretive research approach was the most appropriate for this research, which requires the investigation of a phenomenon in a social context, with data being gathered from a range of participants and brought together by the researcher. In particular, a case study approach was selected.

3.1.3 Case study

Residents of the metropolitan borough in which this research was conducted reflect a diverse socio-economic and cultural mix. Considerable wealth can be found alongside neighbourhoods experiencing some of the country's worst deprivation. This inequality is reflected in health and education. In more deprived areas, health is poor with a higher death rate than for the metropolis as a whole. With regards to education, the 2001 census indicated that whilst numbers of residents with qualifications at degree level or higher was almost double the national average, unemployment and long term unemployment figures were also almost twice the national average.

In 2007, approximately one fifth of the working-age residents were in receipt of benefits, and the borough had one of the highest rates in the country for children with parents in receipt of unemployment benefits. Population mobility and diversity pose considerable challenges for education in the borough and

just over a quarter of children are identified as having SEN (reference withheld for reasons of anonymity).

Approximately 23,500 children attend maintained (state) schools in the borough. Of this number: 6362 receive support for their SEN in mainstream classrooms, but do not have statements; 630 have statements and are educated in mainstream schools, and 310 have statements and do not attend mainstream schools (Aubrey *et al*, 2005).

Case study is defined as an empirical study that: "…investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident." (Yin, 2003: 13).

This approach was selected because: a) the research questions focused the study on education provision for children with MLD in their social context; b) the use of the Bowe *et al* model (1992) demonstrated that the boundaries between the different areas of context were not distinct and c) the case study approach facilitates a mixed methods design and combining qualitative and quantitative data would provide a thorough representation of the study area.

An exemplary case study focuses attention on the boundary between phenomenon and context: in this case a specific focus on education provision for children with MLD, within the general context of SEN provision and uses analytical means to recognise when evidence begins to have less relevance to

the case (Yin, 2003). By using the framework of the policy cycle to consider research questions and data sources (figures 3.1 and 3.2), it was demonstrated that overlap exists between the different contexts of influence, policy text production and practice. The identification of influences worthy of inclusion in this research and those of less relevance, was achieved initially through a survey and thereafter through on-going monitoring of data.

Case study requires the identification of the unit of analysis that forms the focus for the study: the LA. Within the unit of analysis exist subunits which are bound together and shaped by sets of relationships, interacting with each other and with the external environment (Edwards, 2001). Subunits within the LA were identified as: LA departments with SEN responsibilities, school practitioners, parents, pupils and external service providers.

A disadvantage of the case study method is the difficulty of generalising from its findings (Edwards, 2001; Gray, 2004; Yin, 2003), however the aim of this approach is not wider generalisation, but to provide data that supports wider theories, referred to as analytic generalisation (Yin, 2003). There was no intention to generalise from the findings of this study. The aim was to inform practice: analytic generalisation as suggested. However, whilst the outcomes of the research were for LA use, the research process incorporated an analysis of the international and national context of SEN. This wider focus provided valuable data that informed the local context and addressed the criticism of interpretive research that it fails to address the wider social context.

The case study approach facilitates the use of multiple sources of data and methods of data collection to obtain different interpretations of phenomena (Cohen *et al*, 2000; Gray, 2004). Those selected for this research are discussed below. They incorporated the collection of qualitative and quantitative data and provided opportunities for triangulation in relation to method and data source.

3.1.4 Participants, sampling strategy

The population for this research included all those concerned with the education of children aged four to sixteen years with MLD within the LA concerned. Since time and resources were limited, it was necessary to focus the research on a sample of the population. Ideally, the sample would have been randomly selected, however, where this is not possible or not appropriate, non-random (non-probability) samples are used, with the understanding that generalising from the outcomes may not be possible (Cohen *et al*, 2000; Gray, 2004). Since there was no expectation that the findings from this study would be generalised to a wider population, the use of a non-random sample was acceptable. A purposive sample was selected providing a maximum variation sample of schools within the Borough (Gray, 2004), incorporating both wealthy and poor areas, children aged four to sixteen years and mainstream and special education. It involved one nursery, seven primaries, one secondary girls' school and one special school, for children aged four to sixteen years.

Schools within the sample formed a geographic cluster. One of the LA leads for the research was head teacher at a school in the cluster and hence the cluster was invited to take part and agreed on the basis that they believed that they could benefit from the research. Whilst recognising the influence that the LA lead may have had on the choice of schools, the cluster did provide maximum variation in terms of pupil age, mainstream and special provision and socio-economic status: a purposive sample.

Within the school cluster, four settings were selected to be research sites for detailed studies of MLD provision; the nursery; special school, mainstream secondary school and one mainstream primary. The first three were selected because they were the only one of their type in the cluster. The latter was selected as an exemplar of primaries within the cluster, demonstrating a range of socio-economic backgrounds. The remaining primary schools completed the initial survey.

The advantages of the involvement of the cluster were that the schools were used to working as a group, they had identified benefits for their partnership from the research and were therefore willing volunteers, making access easier for the researcher.

The case study subunits were identified as: a) LA departments with SEN responsibilities, b) school practitioners, c) parents, d) pupils and e) external service providers. With regards to the latter, interviews were sought with speech and language therapy staff, however issues of ethics committees and

timelines made this impossible. Within groups a) and b) the following job roles were represented: a) principal educational psychologist; head of the Inclusion Advisory Service; principal special education officer; advisory officers and educational psychologists (the latter two being selected by department heads); b) head teacher, SENCO/inclusion manager, teachers and TAs at each KS, governors with SEN responsibility. In schools, the choice of participants where there was more than one job holder, was the responsibility of either head teachers or SENCOs/inclusion managers.

Pupil participants were selected by the SENCO/inclusion manager or head teacher, from the group of children with MLD in their setting, specifically those with learning and cognition difficulties and not including children with EBD. The issues, discussed in previous chapters, in relation to the classification of MLD created some difficulties in this process. Schools obtained consent from parents for their children to be involved in the research (Appendix H). Where no response was forthcoming, another child was selected, hence participants were not always the first invited. Parents interviewed were the parents of pupil participants.

A mixed methods approach was taken to obtaining data from each of these participants.

3.2 Data collection methods

The choice of data collection methods must ensure that a complete and thorough representation of the study area is achieved, taking account of the need for data to be valid, reliable and trustworthy. To address the research questions, the mixed methods approach incorporated the following:

- Document analysis to understand the national and local context of SEN provision.
- Survey of practitioners and parents to identify key themes and issues, giving direction to research within exemplar schools.
- Interviews with LA and school participants to obtain a detailed view of education provision within the Borough.
- Observations to identify practice, inform interview questions and provided an opportunity to consider whether rhetoric and practice are in accord.

Table 3.1 identifies the research settings, participant job roles, data collection methods used and the research questions addressed by each. Figures in columns indicate the number of responses/participants for each method. The data collection methods employed are discussed below.

Table 3.1: Settings and job roles included in the research.

Location/job role	Inter-views	Observ-ations	Survey	Docu-ment analysis	Research questions addressed
National: • Hansard debate texts				10	1.
Local Authority: • Policy text • Head Inclusion Advisory Service • Principal Educational Psychologist • Principal Special Education Officer • Educational Psychologists • Representatives: Reading Recovery, EMAS.	 1 1 1 2 2			4	1,2 and 4
Each School Research Site: • Head/Deputy Head Teacher • SENCO/Inclusion Manager • Teacher for each KS • TA • Parent • Governor • Pupil for each Key Stage	 4 4 8 7 5 0 5	 9			1,2,3 and 5
Primary Schools (other than research sites): • Head/Deputy Head Teacher • SENCO/Inclusion Manager • Teacher for each KST • TA • Parent • Governor			 6 5 5 5 6 1		2 and 3.

3.2.1 Document analysis

The Bowe *et al* (1992) model suggested a need to identify relevant documents, legislation, policies and guidance at national and local levels relating to SEN, to provide an understanding of the context within which the practice of educating children with MLD occurs. This, in conjunction with other data, will identify whether policy is practiced in schools as intended by Government.

The documents identified for analysis in this research, namely Hansard texts, Acts of Parliament and LA policy and strategy documents, are reliable, primary sources of data. As they have been produced for a purpose other than this research, the content will not have been influenced by this research. In addition, analysing the text will not impact on it; it is an unobtrusive research method. Hence there is an opportunity for other researchers to conduct the same analysis and achieve the same outcomes, providing there has not been any researcher bias during the interpretation (Robson, 2002; Gray, 2004).

When conducting document analysis it is necessary to consider the original purpose of the document, the originators of it and in what context it was produced. These factors can influence the interpretation placed on the content. Text provides witting and unwitting evidence. The former refers to: "…that which the author intended to impart…", whilst unwitting evidence is described as: "…everything else that can be gleaned from the document." (Robson, 2002: 351).

Legislation and policy documents are carefully drafted and hence provide witting evidence. Hansard texts are verbatim records of dialogue. It may be possible to read into what has actually been said, thereby providing unwitting evidence. Care must be taken to avoid this situation, since to make assumptions about meaning would impact on the reliability of the data. Despite this concern, Hansard texts are complete records of all that occurred in the debating chamber during debate and as such, are valuable sources of

information in relation to understanding the national context of SEN at points in time.

A common approach to document analysis is content analysis. The process for this method is to identify the research questions; decide on the sampling strategy for the document selection; decide how to record the evidence collected; create categories that facilitate the management and analysis of the data; test the process and assess the reliability of the data and then complete the analysis (Holsti, 1969, cited in Robson, 2002). This process was followed and is explained in relation to the different sets of data, in the relevant chapters.

3.2.2 Survey

Surveys are often used when there is a large population and researchers require responses to a standard set of questions (Siraj-Blatchford, I. and Siraj-Blatchford, J., 2001; Gray, 2004). They can be a time and resource efficient means of obtaining large amounts of data (Walliman, 2001). However, surveys can also be used with small populations as a means of identifying issues for closer inspection. This is relevant during case studies where themes identified during one aspect of the study are explored during later stages of the research (Edwards, 2001; Gray, 2004). It is also a useful means of identifying factors of less relevance to the research and hence that could be omitted from further investigation.

Survey was used to gather initial data relating to policy and practice at school level. It was for completion by primary school practitioners as detailed previously and parents. The resulting data provided substantial evidence to address the research questions and was used to inform subsequent detailed study in exemplar schools.

The reliability and validity of survey data can be affected by the quality of the questions posed (Robson, 2002) and by researcher bias, if the topics covered and terminology used reflect the thinking of the researcher (Gray, 2004). To address these issues, a questionnaire devised by MacBeath *et al,* (2006) and incorporating the majority of aspects required for this research, was used as a template for this survey.

The researcher examined the questionnaire, deciding whether questions: were necessary; could be amalgamated without losing meaning; were appropriate for all participants' roles and whether they were appropriately worded (Gray, 2004). Consideration of these issues led the researcher to produce a distinct questionnaire, maintaining common questions where possible, for each school job role and parents, thereby avoiding wasted time and frustration for participants. Example questionnaires are shown at Appendix A. Depending upon the job role, the questionnaires incorporated questions relating to for example: preparation and planning; pedagogy; training and support; school-parent partnership and social aspects of education.

Three types of closed question were included in the questionnaires (Gray, 2004): category questions that required one response from a selection; scale questions requiring respondents to indicate how strongly they felt about an issue; list questions offering a range of responses requiring participants to tick all that applied. 'Other' was added to the lists enabling respondents to include items not already on the list, thereby improving the validity of the data. The questionnaires also incorporated open questions to provide opportunities for participants to respond freely about their perspectives. The questionnaires therefore generated both qualitative and quantitative data.

It is suggested that questionnaires should not exceed six pages as there is a risk of a low return rate with longer documents (Gray, 2004), however, some of the resulting documents contained ten pages. This was due mainly to the format of the different types of closed questions, designed to speed up the response process. The quality of the presentation of questionnaires encourages completion (Robson, 2002; Gray, 2004). The layout was therefore carefully considered: separate sections were identified by shaded headings; questions were numbered within sections, and the use of indentation identified individual questions. Limited resources meant that pages were printed on one side and stapled.

Instructions should be included in questionnaires and repeated to provide the best chance of correct completion (Gray, 2004). Instructions were therefore included at the end of each question where relevant, for example, 'please tick all that apply'. An instruction sheet accompanied each questionnaire

(Appendix L), outlining: the content, suggesting an approximate completion time, providing the researcher's contact details, clarifying terminology and thanking them for their time.

The questionnaires were piloted with staff at an infant school known to the researcher. During this pilot no misunderstandings of the questions emerged and the data gathered provided the information required. The TA indicated that her current role, which did not involve pupils with MLD, made some questions irrelevant, highlighting the importance of selecting appropriate TAs to complete the questionnaire. Views were sought regarding completion times and no concerns were raised.

Following the successful pilot, one set of questionnaires (Appendix A), instruction sheets (Appendix L), and consent forms (Appendix N) was hand delivered to each of the six primary schools involved. Whilst questionnaires offer participants the opportunity for completion at a time and place convenient to them, there are disadvantages associated with them, for example, misunderstanding questions, difficultly articulating thoughts, or responding in a negative manner to the survey itself. It is not always possible to detect these situations from the completed document (Gray, 2004). For these reasons and to obtain the best possible rate of returns, participants were offered the choice of self-completion, or completing the questionnaires in structured interviews. Participants at three of the six primary schools selected interviews, which were conducted, responses were typed and returned to participants for checking.

Self-completed questionnaires were collected from schools at pre-arranged times.

It was recognised that hand delivery and collection of questionnaires and completion by structured interview was not time or resource efficient. However, the likelihood of all participants requesting an interview was considered to be small and was weighed against the benefit of achieving a greater rate of returns within a given timeframe. This proved to be a worthwhile tactic, resulting in twenty eight out of thirty six responses and supporting the validity of the data.

The data gathered informed the development of tools for interviews and observations, by highlighting elements to be explored in greater detail and those that were of less relevance to the research questions.

3.2.3 Interviews

In phenomenological research, interviews provide a useful tool for obtaining individual perspectives on phenomena and enable the researcher to probe for greater detail or more information. In addition, they provide opportunities to explore observation data and document interpretations (Edwards, 2001).

The external validity of data is strengthened where sufficient interviews are completed to enable a full picture of a phenomenon to be obtained from different perspectives (Arksey and Knight, 1999). This was achieved through

conducting interviews with LA and school participants, parents and pupils as detailed in section 3.2.4.

There is a spectrum of interview types. Unstructured interviews have been referred to as a: "…conversation with a purpose…" (Siraj-Blatchford, I. and Siraj-Blatchford, J., 2001: 151). They provide an opportunity to ascertain information beyond the original remit. Participants speak freely and the researcher asks open-ended questions for clarification and detail, whilst being careful to avoid bias. Unstructured interviews are considered to be one of the most important methods used in case studies (Yin, 2003; Bell, 1993), however whilst they provide more information, adding to the validity of the data, this is at the cost of reliability, since they cannot be replicated (Gray, 2004).

At the opposite end of the spectrum is the structured interview; the researcher has a pre-set list of questions that are asked verbatim, always in the same order and using the same tone of voice. These questions can be used to restrict the range of responses given by participants, and the tighter the range the greater the opportunity to quantify the responses, adding to the reliability of the data (Siraj-Blatchford, I. and Siraj-Blatchford, J., 2001; Cannold, 2001; Gray, 2004).

The unstructured interview was attractive for this research, however, there were specific aspects of education provision that needed to be investigated. To ensure that these were covered within the allocated time, a semi-structured approach was selected. Interview schedules were developed for each job role

in the LA and schools (Appendices B and C), for parents (Appendix D) and for pupils (Appendix E). Questions were developed from the research questions, took account of the survey data, and were worded so as to be unambiguous, free of jargon and unbiased (Gray, 2004). With regard to the latter, questions asked about both negative and positive situations, such as, what schools do well and what could be better; who benefits from inclusive policy and who suffers.

Participants were advised in advance of the anticipated time that an interview might take. Whilst the researcher was aware of moving the interview along, participants were provided with time to answer fully (Gray, 2004; Arksey and Knight, 1999). In terms of getting a good return for requests for data, interviews are a good method to use (Gray, 2004) although if they are likely to be lengthy this may deter some from being involved (Robson, 2002).

Good interview technique requires that questions: are asked one at a time, briefly and clearly, do not lead the participant to a particular answer and are not asked in an emotive manner (Siraj-Blatchford, I. and Siraj-Blatchford, J., 2001). These techniques were evident for the majority of the time, although transcripts evidenced some occasions when the first criteria was not met.

It is accepted good practice to pilot interview schedules (Brooker, 2001). In this case, whilst the researcher piloted the survey schedule, the interview schedule was structured around the research questions and particular issues

that emerged from the survey. This raised challenges in identifying a suitable pilot group for interviewing.

Issues of power must be considered in interview situations, since these are: "…not simply a data collection situation but a social and frequently political situation." (Cohen *et al,* 2000: 122). Power may be held by either the interviewer or interviewee, depending upon their status. The researcher was aware of where power may lie in each interview situation, and the behaviour required to create a balance during the interview, for example: sound preparation; style of dress; mode of address; use of conversation and location of seats.

Interviews consisted of five elements: an introduction, warm up, main body, cool off and closure (Robson 2002: 277). The researcher began by explaining the research process and aims, reiterating participants' rights and obtaining their written consent to participate (Appendix N). It is important at this stage to build a rapport with the participant so that they do not restrict their responses (Arksey and Knight, 1999). At the end of interviews, participants need to feel positive about the experience (Gray, 2004; Cohen *et al*, 2000) and time to adjust and return to 'practice mode' (Gray, 2004).

The researcher used interview schedules as prompts during the interviews. Frequently questions were not asked at all because the participant had already provided that information. It is suggested that asking questions out of sequence can be an indication of researcher bias (Oppenheim cited in Gray,

2004), however, another perspective is that it demonstrates improvisation, a skill that can prove successful in semi-structured or unstructured interviewing (Arksey and Knight, 1999). Questions were asked out of sequence where appropriate to fit the flow of the interview as topics emerged, rather than to influence the response.

Article 12 of the UNCRC articulates the right of children to have a say in matters affecting them; their right to be listened to and to have their views respected (UNCF, 1995; Lansdown and Lancaster, 2001; Coady, 2001; Brooker, 2001). Children are capable of articulating their views quite clearly (Wolfendale, 2001; Brooker, 2001) and so it was important to include them in this research.

Lewis (1995: 41) referred to: "…inherent difficulties in obtaining fair and accurate responses when interviewing children…". In relation to her own research, she warned of the need, when interpreting interview data, to be mindful of issues such as: whether an answer is replicable; whether children answer a question even though they did not understand it, or give an answer they think is wanted. Using data from other sources may offer opportunities for triangulation, thereby supporting (or otherwise) the findings.

Interviews were conducted with children from KS2 to KS4 in mainstream and special settings. It is suggested that questions addressed to children should be open and the ordering and wording of them should be flexible, to

accommodate the child's needs, whilst being mindful of possible bias and of changing their meaning (Lewis, 1995).

The researcher used questions devised for the scoping study (Aubrey *et al*, 2005) as the basis for interview schedules. Questions took account of pupils' abilities and their educational context to ensure that they were appropriate. If it was evident that the participant did not understand the question, the researcher rephrased them appropriately. It had been hoped that focus groups of pupils might be possible, as this can address power issues and provide a supportive environment in which peers help each other to clarify their thoughts (Brooker, 2001). However, this was not feasible.

Only pupils whose parents had given consent for an interview were included, and very young children were observed and spoken with informally in the classroom, where appropriate, rather than in formal interview situations. Pupils were asked if they were happy to take part and whether the voice recorder could be used. In one instance the researcher disregarded the voice recorder over concerns that the pupil was uncomfortable.

The use of a voice recorder during interviews allowed the researcher to concentrate on listening, preparing the next question and making notes during the process (Gray, 2004). It captured pauses and intonation which are important in analysis. It is necessary to consider whether the presence of the recorder affects participants' responses. If suspected, researchers must be reflexive in their practice and either abandon the voice recorder, or ask further

clarifying questions (Oliver, 2003). Where the voice recorder was not used detailed notes were made, and the researcher slowed the process of the interview to ensure that information was captured, verbatim quotes written down and all questions asked. Interviews are time intensive in terms of preparation, conducting the interview and transcribing data. Full transcripts, whilst ideal, can be costly (Gray, 2004), however, these were obtained and returned to participants for checking, thus improving the validity of the data.

Focus groups are a specific form of group interview, in which participants discuss amongst themselves a topic provided by the researcher (Cohen *et al*, 2000; Robson, 2002). It was intended that focus groups would form part of the data collection process for a number of reasons: the social interaction that occurs in group situations can elicit data that may not be forthcoming in one-to-one interviews; the data provide opportunities for triangulation with other data collection methods (Arksey and Knight, 1999; Cohen *et al*, 2000); they create substantial amounts of data in a short period and are therefore an efficient research method (Cohen *et al*, 2000; Robson, 2002) and the extent to which there are agreed or discrepant views is relatively easy to assess (Robson, 2002). Group situations may help to dissipate power issues between researcher and participant, however, it is possible that one participant in a group may dominate proceedings (Arksey and Knight, 1999; Robson, 2002), hence the requirement for a skilled researcher to manage the process (Robson, 2002).

It is recognised (Arksey and Knight, 1999) that focus groups can be difficult to convene for reasons of, for example, timetables and sufficient participants. In the event, it was only possible to convene one group of three TAs who were colleagues. Of these, one had previously been interviewed individually and one left part way through the interview due to illness. The group did not therefore meet the requirements for a focus group discussed above. Due to the size of the group the format was that of the semi-structured interview, but with questions addressed to the group and answered by each individual. There were benefits from this situation, however, in that they appeared to speak frankly about issues as they perceived them, and prompted each other to recall examples of situations.

Parents of pupils being observed in the exemplar settings, agreed to be interviewed. Two parents chose telephone interviews; one was forthcoming and appeared quite comfortable with the telephone situation. The second was less responsive, perhaps because they could not see the researcher, they were concerned about data remaining confidential, or because at the same time as conducting the conversation on the telephone, they were engaged in another task. Both interviews were shorter than might have been the case in a face-to-face situation, but whilst the researcher was aware of the participants' time, the interviews were not shortened. The shorter nature of telephone interviews is typical (Cohen *et al*, 2000), however, despite their brief nature, the data were valuable.

Telephone interviews are a low cost, convenient means for obtaining data, and as in this situation, enable the researcher to obtain interviews that may otherwise not be feasible (Cohen *et al*, 2000; Robson, 2002). Notes were written during the telephone conversations, typed and sent to parents for checking.

Although semi-structured interviews were used, every effort was made to ensure that data gathered by this method was as valid and reliable as possible.

3.2.4 Observations

Direct observations are generally used to record data relating to children's behaviours, for example, social, emotional or cognitive behaviours. The data gathered by this means can be used to review "…the effectiveness of provision…", identifying good practice and areas for development (Nutbrown, 2001: 69). The research questions required the researcher to produce evidence of existing provision, identifying effective practice and areas for review, hence observation was an appropriate data gathering method to use. Observations of children in each KS and in mainstream and special schools were undertaken.

Different types of observation can be used: descriptive narratives provide a rich account of happenings and contexts, and require the researcher to write notes about events as they happen; event-sequenced observations concentrate on specific events whenever they occur, and time sequenced

observations record particular behaviours at set time intervals (Rolfe, 2001; Edwards, 2001).

Descriptive narrative and time sequenced methods were used. The former enabled the researcher to obtain a detailed description of school life for a child with MLD at each KS. The inductive nature of observations meant that in analysing the data, issues could come to light that had not been raised during interviews or that contradicted other data.

From the point of view of the validity of the data, recording everything that occurred prevented bias by the researcher in terms of which data to collect. However, it is necessary to recognise that in trying to make sense of what they witness, the recordings made reflect the researcher's knowledge and experience (Selleck, 2001; Gray, 2004). In view of the added risk of subjectivity with this method, it is important that the analysis of the data is completed carefully taking account of the context and being open to alternative interpretations.

Descriptive narrative observations commenced with the researcher recording general information about the session, such as, start/finish times, subject, location and participants and when appropriate, a diagram of the classroom. The researcher was usually located on the periphery of the classroom, near the target pupil and where the whole classroom could be observed. A narrative sheet (Appendix F) was then used to record: times indicating, for example: how the class was organised in terms of group, paired or individual

working; teaching strategies and teacher activity; whether target pupil received additional support and if so, from whom, for what period and in what way; the nature of activities and pupils' responses; interactions between the pupils, their peers and staff.

It is suggested (Gray, 2004) that too much data is better than too little and that something recorded in the field may hold greater significance when seen in the light of data from other sources. The field notes also contained the researcher's thoughts during the observations and any information and insights provided by the teachers and TAs during these occasions.

Two different approaches were tried by the researcher for time-sampling observations, however each proved difficult to use. One, 'observation of pupils and teachers in classroom' (Appendix G), provided a quantitative measure for determining the atmosphere in a classroom. The researcher needed to record positive and negative, academic and social talk by the teacher at intervals, and pupil behaviour measured by whether they were on or off task, during intervals. In most KS3 and KS4 classes, teacher talk during structured periods focused entirely on the topic, pupils remained quiet and static. During unstructured periods teacher talk could not be heard and pupils moved continually. In classrooms where children remained in their places and there was greater interaction between the teacher and pupils, this tool was used and the findings included in the analysis.

A second time sampling tool demonstrated children's interaction with their peers in play situations. The shape, and size of playgrounds, and the quantity and size of play equipment made continual observation of the target child impossible.

Observations may be made overtly in which case those being observed are provided with a full account of the research and the participant's role, or covertly, when observations are made without the person's knowledge. Overt observations are considered a more ethical option as participants have consented, however, the validity of the data may be affected by people behaving differently when being watched. Covert observations may provide greater validity, but require the researcher to behave in what might be considered an unethical manner (Gray, 2004).

The researcher conducted observations both overtly and covertly according to circumstance. Teachers were to be made aware by school leaders of the observations taking place and in the majority of circumstances this requirement was met, hence observations were conducted overtly.

Parents were provided with full details about the research prior to giving consent for observations and interviews (Appendix H). In all but two cases, the children were provided with an explanation appropriate for their level of understanding from "I would like to see what your day is like in school and what things you do", to a full explanation of the research for the older pupils.

Two children, in the Foundation Stage and KS1, were not advised that they were being observed. The decision to carry out covert observations is problematic. From an ethical perspective, they may appear to violate the principal of informed consent (Cohen *et al*, 2000); participants should be given the opportunity not to participate in research (Robson, 2002). However, there is a question regarding whether children, in this case young children with MLD, can: "rationally, knowingly and freely give informed consent." (Robson, 2002:70). It is suggested that in these situations the difficulty of obtaining consent from the child should be offset by obtaining it from parents, which was the case in this research (Lindsay, 2000; Robson, 2002). The dilemma persists, however, that whilst informed consent is obtained from parents, from an ethical perspective, children should still be asked for their assent, whether or not they fully understand the nature of the study. Not to do so could, it is suggested (Cohen *et al*, 2000), be to treat children as objects of research rather than participants.

It is possible that to make children aware that they are being observed, will cause them to change their behaviour and therefore impact the data (Robson, 2002). Whilst the study required participants to behave naturally, this did not prevent the researcher from requesting participants' assent. The researcher was advised by teaching staff, the gatekeepers who ultimately controlled the researcher's access (Masson, 2000), that either the children would not understand what was asked of them, or may become concerned. In this situation, key considerations for the researcher were whether participation in the observations would cause the participants harm, or require them to behave

in any way other than naturally; it would not. In addition, they received the protection of the anonymity and confidentiality of the data. A final consideration was that the research was aimed at improving education provision for the group of pupils that included these children (Cohen *et al*, 2000). In such situations, it could be argued that the benefits to society need to be weighed against the risk of harm to the child (Lindsay, 2000). As a consequence of the researcher considering all of these issues, covert observations were undertaken. As Lindsay states (2000:18): "Resolving a dilemma is not mechanistic. In many cases there is no 'obvious' answer, but rather a balance of judgement is required."

The researcher attempted not to affect pupils or environments, however on occasions this proved difficult to achieve. The validity of the data may be compromised if people behave in different ways from normal because of the observation. Spending time in settings prior to starting the data collection in order to become familiar is helpful (Edwards, 2001), however, time and resources prohibited this in all except the special school. From an ethical perspective it is important to consider the impact of the researcher on the participant in terms of the stress of being observed, for example, and the disruption caused to the normal running of the classroom (Oliver, 2003). Even though observations focused on children, the researcher's presence did impact teachers, particularly in the primary age range where the researcher was present all day. For teachers of KS3 and KS4 pupils the impact was lessened because pupils moved between lessons.

Mainstream KS3 and KS4 pupils were advised that they were being observed and asked to guide the researcher to lessons during the day. One pupil tried to involve the researcher in lessons, which was gently discouraged. Very young pupils, appeared undeterred by the presence of the researcher; they seemed used to having unfamiliar adults in their classes. One KS2 pupil appeared to act up because they were being observed, but this was noted.

The initial goal was to complete the observations over at least one full day and where possible, two days per child. In taking account of the impact upon pupils and teachers the actual length of observations varied: the Foundation Stage observations occurred over three days because the child was not in the setting full time; the mainstream KS1 and KS2 observations were one full day each; the mainstream KS3 and KS4 pupils continued into a second day each; the special school KS1 observation continued for two days, whilst the special school KS2, 3 and 4 observations were one day each plus additional time spent generally in the environment prior to the specific observations.

3.3 Process of data analysis

When analysing case study data it is important to maintain an holistic view, ensuring that the findings offer a case view rather than simply a description of the subunits (Yin, 2003).

Interpreting data requires great care to ensure that responses are accurately recorded and that any subjectivity on the part of the researcher is avoided.

There is a requirement to continually question the process and consider the impact that the context, the data collection methods, and the relationship between the researcher and participant, may have had on the responses. Consideration of these aspects may lead to a different interpretation of a participant's response than might initially be the case (Alderson, 2000).

The data analysis process requires the data to be interrogated with the research questions in mind, and multiple categories and examples should be included (Strauss, 1987 cited in Gray, 2004). Data from various sources were combined (Edwards, 2001) and at the first level of analysis the process was deductive, that is, categories were applied to the data as opposed to categories developing from the data: an a priori approach (Gray, 2004).

Appropriate categories were identified from the sets of questions asked in interview and through the survey, hence these categories related directly to the research questions (Appendix O). As the data were analysed, relevant elements were included in the appropriate category, however, where data did not match the category description, either the description had to be altered or a new category added (Gray, 2004). Therefore, the categories decided upon for the first level of analysis evolved throughout the process (Edwards, 2001; Gray, 2004). At the second level of analysis, after the specific research questions had been addressed, the data were analysed to identify any emergent themes. This minimised any threat to validity from using a framework to interpret data, as opposed to using an inductive approach (Robson, 2002).

Anonymity and confidentiality of participants can be maintained throughout the analysis and reporting of the data by using coding systems, fictional names or numbers (Coady, 2001; Oliver, 2003). This enables the researcher to identify data sources to illustrate issues raised (Edwards, 2001). This was achieved by the use of codes relating to roles and location: each participant therefore had a unique code assigned to their raw data. The code was also included in analysed data to facilitate reference to original texts.

3.4 Role of the researcher

The inductive nature of interpretive research requires the researcher to gather individual interpretations of a phenomena from different sources, and to draw these data together to develop understanding and theories about the phenomena (Cohen *et al*, 2000; Robson, 2002). From a phenomenological perspective the researcher must approach the research with no bias or pre-conceived ideas about phenomena being studied (Gray, 2004). How the knowledge acquired from the research process is used depends upon the interests of the community conducting the research. Within the interpretive paradigm the knowledge acquired will be used to extend understanding and improve a situation, as for this research (Cohen *et al*, 2000).

Robson (2002: 167) suggests that the qualities of the researcher are: an open and enquiring mind; being a good listener; being sensitive and responsive to contradictory evidence. These skills were learned by the researcher during a career in human resources. An ability to empathise with participants is useful

in recognising ethical issues that may arise. Researchers can recognise how they might feel in a given situation and how they might expect to be treated (Oliver, 2003). It is important for a researcher to recognise the limits of their competence. They must be objective in conducting the research, analysing and reporting the data (Gray, 2004).

Researchers should publish the findings of research, whether these be positive or otherwise. Not to do so would be unfair to participants who have given time and support to the study (Alderson, 2000). When writing their research report, researchers have an obligation to report their findings accurately and in a manner that is accessible to the reader, whomever this may be. Where there may be different interpretations of the data, these should be stated in the findings (Oliver, 2003).

3.5 Reliability, validity and trustworthiness

Issues of validity, reliability and trustworthiness, relating specifically to each method of data collection selected, have been discussed previously.

An evaluation of previous research conducted by Daniels and Porter (2007) identified an issue with a lack of focus on the validity and reliability of data. Validity in qualitative research refers to the honesty and accuracy of the data gathered, although it is argued that no research can ever be entirely valid (Cohen *et al*, 2000; Robson 2002). Edwards (2001: 124) defines validity as:

"…a matter of being able to offer as sound a representation of the field of study as the research methods allow…".

Reliability relates to the possibility of another researcher conducting research with the same tools and in the same context, and achieving the same or similar results (Gray, 2004; Robson, 2002). Reliability in interpretive research is difficult to achieve, since people are not an homogenous group and so respond differently in different situations and at different times. Children in particular are unlikely to respond in the same way to questions at a later date even in structured situations (Brooker, 2001; Lewis, 1995). Care must therefore be taken to further strengthen the validity and trustworthiness of the data.

An equivalent measure to reliability and validity is that of credibility and related trustworthiness criteria. This is measured by such means as: peer debriefing; triangulation of data; prolonged engagement, requiring researchers to spend sufficient time building trust and understanding the culture of the context within which the research occurs; persistent observation, whereby researchers observe for sufficient time to be able to identify common and discrepant practice (Aubrey *et al*, 2000). The researcher was mindful of these issues throughout the study.

A mixed methods approach to data collection supports validity and trustworthiness by using methodological and data triangulation, enabling the researcher to obtain and compare different perspectives from different sources, thus creating a robust picture of the study area and providing an opportunity to

identify common and discrepant data (Edwards, 2001; Gray 2004; Robson, 2002; Yin, 2003).

It is suggested that activity and interpretations should be documented in the form of a protocol, so that the research process can be scrutinised if required (Yin, 2003; Robson, 2002; Edwards, 2001; Gray, 2004; Aubrey *et al*, 2000). Providing an audit trail enhances the trustworthiness of the research. Research diaries, records of appointments, correspondence, notes of meetings and field notes were maintained for this purpose.

Observations are considered to improve in relation to reliability if conducted by two or more researchers (Yin, 2003). This was not possible, however, trustworthiness measures refer to prolonged engagement and persistent observation. Time spent in schools during the data collection phase enabled the researcher to build relationships with participants and gain an understanding of the context of SEN in each environment. It is argued that spending too much time in an environment can have a positive or negative impact on researchers (Robson, 2002), however, care was taken to remain objective. This was supported by peer debriefing. With regard to individual observations, sufficient data were gathered to identify practice that might be considered the norm and that which was different in some way. Whilst reliability in relation to observations may not have been achievable, trustworthiness was supported.

Accurate and complete data supports validity (Robson, 2002) and reduces the risk of researcher bias: the reporting of the researcher's views rather than those of participants', which is a concern in interpretive research. Steps were taken to minimise the risk of bias through the use of a voice recorder and the return of transcripts to participants and through peer debriefing. The latter requires researchers to reflect on the data collected and question whether they may have influenced it (Gray, 2004; Robson, 2002) and was a regular feature of the research process. Frequent meetings with the LA lead provided opportunities to: clarify issues of policy, process, practice and protocol; enhance understanding of the context within which the findings emerged; question data, and comment if reported findings were unexpected. The researcher was also fortunate to be supervised by the author of the scoping study (Aubrey *et al,* 2005), whose knowledge of the research context and previous findings enabled the researcher to question and justify findings, thus reducing the risk of bias or misinterpretation.

The scoping study (Aubrey *et al*, 2005) and the quantitative data produced for the LA (Aubrey *et al*, 2008) provided opportunities to consider whether similarities existed between the findings. The quantitative analysis provided a framework for the study and revealed trends of SEN attainment within the Borough.

3.6 Ethical issues

A number of factors must be considered when conducting research involving children: the provision of information; consent; possible risks and benefits for participants; confidentiality and anonymity; a non-discriminatory sampling strategy, and the selection of appropriate data collection tools (Alderson, 2000; Gray, 2004).

Possible risks to adult participants of taking part in the research were small, for example, concern regarding being interviewed or discomfort in the school setting. There were potential benefits from conducting the research, however, it was important to make clear to participants that they may not personally benefit; the nature of the research being such that change, if any, would take time to implement.

Risks for pupil participants were also considered. Parents would not be present during the data gathering process and so would be unable to withdraw their children from the process (Coady, 2001). Instead, teachers could withdraw pupils from the research if necessary; none did. The researcher, however, considered that there were risks to two mainstream secondary pupils in the form of excessive interest by peers in the involvement of the pupils in the research. The researcher ceased the observations earlier than planned, in the pupils' best interests.

It can be argued that where there is no risk to participants, informed consent though desirable, is not always necessary (Cohen *et* al, 2000; Robson, 2002). Risks were minimal, however, consent was obtained from all adult participants (Appendix N) and from the LA and head teachers in respect of the settings (Appendix I, J, K) (Oliver. 2003; Cohen *et al*, 2000).

Participants were provided with an information sheet, prior to giving consent, either with their survey questionnaire, or prior to interview. Assurances were provided regarding: confidentiality; anonymity of the data; restricted access to the raw data and their right to withdraw from the process at any time.

The researcher was guided by staff regarding whether to obtain assent from children who staff felt, would not comprehend the nature of the research and their involvement in it (Oliver, 2003). Pupils were advised that they could stop interviews at any point, however, it was recognised that this could be difficult for children, hence, if at any point the children appeared uncomfortable, the interview was brought to a close (Gray, 2004). Length of interviews varied according to pupils' levels of concentration, however, the researcher did ensure that they were given sufficient time to express their views.

It is important that data remains confidential and anonymous, ensuring that at all stages in the research process, participants are not identifiable from the data or reports produced (Coady, 2001; Cohen *et al*, 2000). Maintaining anonymity can be beneficial to both participant and researcher, as negative issues can be discussed without fear of recrimination by the participant,

facilitating an objective approach. This enables the researcher to report the findings accurately (Oliver, 2003). The confidentiality of the raw data was maintained by restricting access and using a coding system as discussed in section 3.4. Signed letters consenting to participation were coded and kept separately from the data. The combining of data for reporting purposes was another method of maintaining anonymity which was used for this research (Oliver, 2003). Computer files relating to interview transcripts typed externally by professional typists were destroyed once completed documents had been transferred to the researcher.

Concern to act in an ethical manner guided the researcher's actions with regards to the checking of transcripts by pupils. The SENCO had been present in one interview and with the pupil's agreement, she checked the transcript on the pupil's behalf. The remaining three pupils were not asked to check their transcripts: one pupil had left the school before the transcript was prepared, and in two instances, the pupils' ability to read and check the text was limited without support. Having promised confidentiality, the researcher was concerned that to ask pupils to review the transcript with school staff or a parent, breached that promise of confidentiality, and could have affected their willingness to allow the data to be used.

Care and sensitivity was required when interviewing parents unfamiliar with the setting and situation and for whom having children with difficulties may have been stressful. It was also important to be aware that some parents may be

unhappy with their child's provision and to understand the researcher's role in that situation (Gray, 2004).

It is necessary to be clear with sponsors about the research process and any boundaries that exist (Oliver, 2003; Gray, 2004). Prior to commencement of the research, detailed discussions took place with the LA lead in order to be clear about the purpose of the research, obtain permission to access the schools selected and to obtain agreement to the data collection methods, tools and timetable. Whilst sponsors facilitate the research process, it is important to recognise that the final report is the work of the researcher. Providing an opportunity for sponsors to comment on a draft report could be construed as allowing them to influence the findings (Oliver, 2003). Regular meetings with the sponsor were a feature of this research, however whilst emerging findings were discussed, the LA made no attempt to influence the final outcomes.

Ethical issues with regard to conducting observations have been discussed previously in section 3.3.4. The sampling strategy in respect of pupil participants was discussed in section 3.2.4.

3.7 Conclusion

It was recognised that in taking an interpretive approach to the research there would be issues of validity and reliability to address. The Bowe *et al* (1992) model provided a framework to guide the selection of aspects of the policy to practice context that would need investigation, and the case study approach

provided the means by which this investigation could occur. The methods of data collection selected provided opportunities for data to be tested and challenged, thus ascertaining its robustness.

CHAPTER 4

HANSARD EVIDENCE

4.0 Introduction

To gain access to prevailing influences, struggles and possible compromises that shaped political thought since the *Education Act* (DES, 1976), parliamentary debates were interrogated. Hansard provides complete texts for all debates that take place in the Houses of Parliament. These texts provided a basis for understanding the context and influences surrounding SEN during that time.

Relevant themes that emerged from the selected texts, represented changes and continuities in views regarding: inclusion; the issue of parental choice; funding and the role of LAs; pedagogy and teacher training. In addition the texts provided an insight into possible influences on the views of their Lordships, and MPs. The texts therefore provided a rich and complete illustration of the Bowe *et al* (1992) model of the continuous policy cycle; demonstrating the influences on policy, issues of policy text production and practice.

4.1 Aims

The Hansard texts were examined with a view to obtaining an understanding of: possible influences on their Lordships' and MPs' thinking; the aspects of

SEN that appeared to attract the greatest attention, and the changing views towards these; whether policies appeared to be implemented in practice as intended by Government and an indication of society's changing views of SEN.

The aim of this analysis was to address the first research question:

1. What is the policy to practice context for inclusion of pupils with MLD?

However, the analysis also informed the following questions:

2. How do schools (head teachers and teachers) implement the policy regarding the inclusion of pupils with MLD?
3. What are the experiences of teachers and pupils with MLD in special and inclusive settings?
4. What are the views of the variety of stakeholders tasked with implementation of inclusion policy as practised at the school level?

4.2 Methods

4.2.1 Participants

During speeches in both Houses of Parliament, references were made to the wealth of knowledge and experience represented. Many participants in the debates had: been involved professionally in education as teachers, or head teachers, in mainstream and special education; held Government education posts; been associated with relevant Parliamentary Committees; held positions in charities for the disabled; been school governors. In both Houses

there were those with personal experience of SEN or disability in their own families.

The debates selected involved Secretaries of State, Under Secretaries of State, Ministers of Education, and Shadow Spokespersons for Education (the titles changing with Departmental changes). The period under review saw Conservative and Labour Governments in office for long periods of time.

4.2.2 Materials

Hansard texts are available online, providing transcripts of all proceedings in the Houses of Parliament.

4.2.2.1 Format of debates

The texts used followed a regular format: his/her Lordship, Minister, or MP, proposed the motion, making an initial presentation, explaining and justifying the position. The debate was then opened to the House, and the Speaker invited their Lordships, and those Honourable Members who made themselves known, to speak. Ministers either responded to specific issues during debate, or addressed them in the summing-up.

4.2.2.2 Process of Bills through Parliament

Bills follow a strict process through parliament. Initially drafted by lawyers in the Parliamentary Counsel Office, they are introduced firstly to the HC (sometimes to the House of Lords) in a First Reading, and subsequently examined and debated in full in the Second Reading. The Committee and subsequent Report Stages provide opportunities to amend clauses and schedules, before returning to the House for the Third Reading which: "…enables the House to take an overview of the bill…" (HC Information Office, 2008:6).

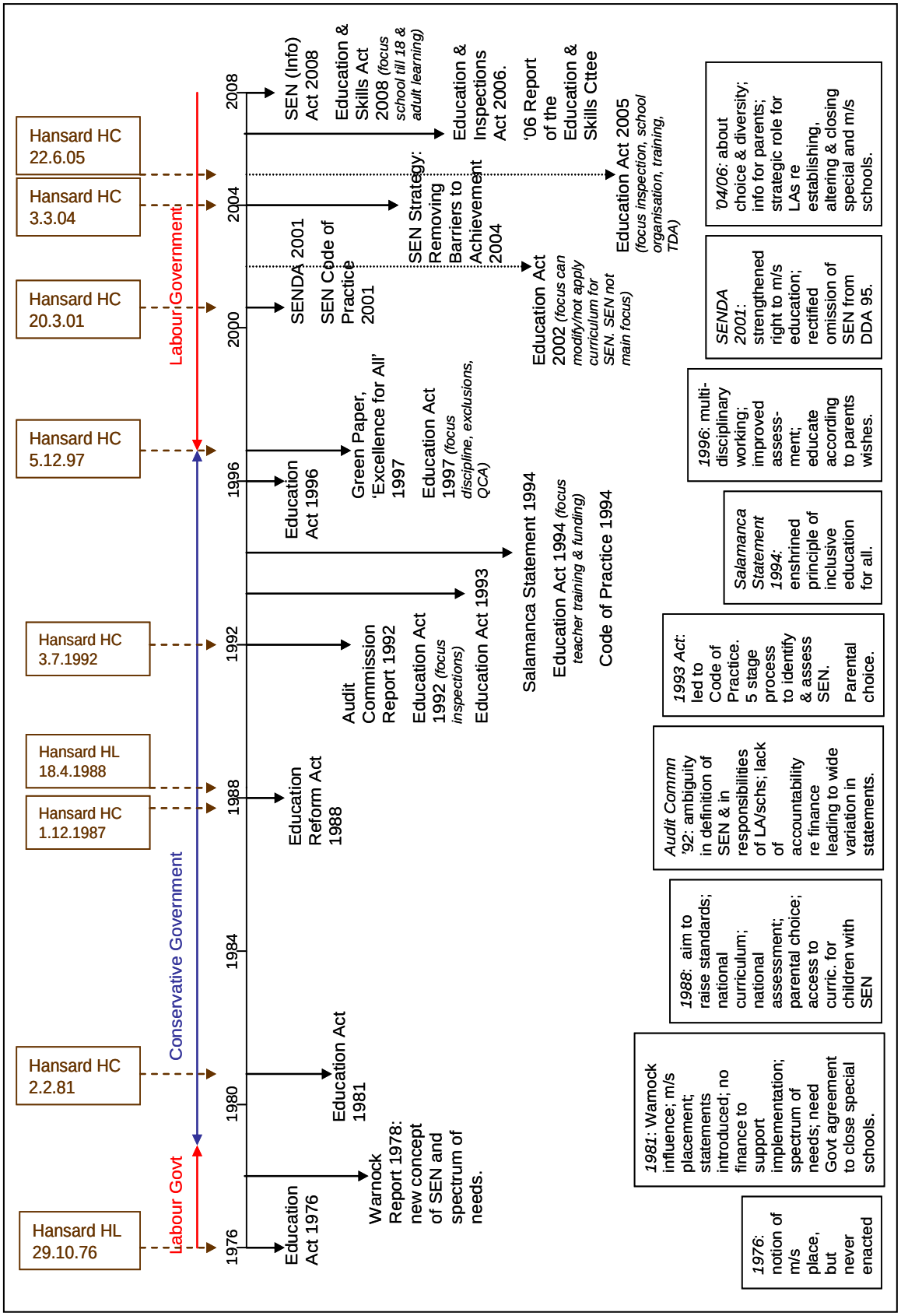
The Bill then passes to the House of Lords, to re-commence the process. The Bill becomes an Act of Parliament when both Houses of Parliament have agreed the final text, and it has been submitted for Royal Assent (HC Information Office, 2008).

4.2.3 Procedure

To obtain a relevant and representative sample of debates, the following selection process was employed.

Initially the period from the *Education Act* (DES, 1976) was selected. A timeline from that date to the present was drawn, plotting key education legislation and policy (figure 4.1). Using this time line, the search for relevant Hansard texts focused on the periods around those events that had the

Figure 4.1 Hansard time line



greatest direct, intended and unintended impact on SEN, namely the: *Education Act* (DES, 1976), which contained a clause, never enacted, referring to the education of children with SEN in mainstream classes; *Education Act* (DES, 1981), which incorporated some of the recommendations of the Warnock Report (DES, 1978); *ERA* (DES,1988), which caused significant, unintended consequences for the education of children with SEN; Audit Commission Report (Audit Commission/HMI, 1992), which provided a critical evaluation of the implementation of the *Education Act* (DES, 1981) and SEN provision; the Green Paper: 'Excellence for All Children: Meeting SEN' (DfEE, 1997), which led to substantial changes in practice; *SENDA* (DfES, 2001); the Government's Strategy for SEN (DfES, 2004), which set out the Government's policy on SEN from that point forward.

The online search therefore commenced with searches for the periods 1976; 1981; 1988; 1992; 1997; 2001; 2004. Searches prior to 1988 involved the website: hansard.millbanksystems.com. By searching by phrase and year, it was possible to identify days during the year when the search term was most frequently used and to further identify who used the term and in which House. Relevant debate texts could then be accessed.

From 1992, the website used to access Hansard texts was: www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/pahansard.htm. The advanced search facility could be used to enter a search term, the time span, and the sources to be searched, for example 'debates' in both Houses of Parliament. The search results must then be examined to identify relevant debates. This process frequently provided

several debates and it was necessary to be selective, for the analysis to remain manageable. Debates of Second Readings were selected as these debates were wide-ranging and provided a substantial amount of data. Debates relating to First Readings were disregarded because these constituted the formal publication of the Bill, and those of Committees were disregarded, because debate focused on fine details. One additional debate that was identified and selected was an Opposition Day Motion, June 2005. The focus was the closure of special schools and inclusion as a policy. The subject matter made it relevant to this research, and hence it was included. The final texts selected for analysis are shown in Table 4.1.

The texts were read, initially noting the focus of the debate, key issues, and the nature of opposing arguments. References to possible sources of influence were recorded. Where MPs/their Lordships played a major role in debates, online searches indicated any Government role they may have had and/or personal involvement in SEN issues. This identified possible influences on their thinking about SEN.

Table 4.1: Hansard texts selected for the review.

House	Date	Vol-ume	Part No.	Col-umns	Debate focus	Stage in Parliamentary Process
Lords	29 Oct 1976	376		801-872	Education Bill 1976.	Report
Commons	2 Feb 1981	998		27-102	Education Bill 1981.	Second Reading
Commons	1 Dec 1987	123		771-868	Education Reform Bill 1988	Second Reading
Lords	18 April 1988	495		1211-1349	Education Reform Bill 1988	Second Reading
Lords	19 April 1988	495		1362 – 1474	Education Reform Bill 1988	Second Reading; resumed
Commons	3 July 1992	210		1071-1137	Opportunities for children and adults with SEN are being jeopardised by the fragmentation of education and lack of resources. Follows recent publication of Audit Commission Report	Early Day Motion
Commons	5 Dec 1997	302		580-636	Green paper: 'Excellence for All: Meeting SEN'.	Green Paper debate
Commons	20 March 2001	365	55	215-306	SEN and Disability Bill 2001.	Second Reading
Commons	11 Feb 2004	417	539	1429-1443	'Removing Barriers to Achievement: the Government's Strategy for SEN' (DfES, 2004).	Publication of strategy (White Paper) debate
Commons	22 June 2005	435	91	821-876	Request for a moratorium on the closure of special schools and a review of Government guidance and legislation.	Opposition Day Motion

4.2.4 Analysis

The second reading of the texts was used to group the content, to respond to the research questions using the following headings (an a priori approach): policy; mainstream versus special school; parents' rights/choice; funding/resources; teachers: training, practice, pedagogy; pupil experience/terminology; teaching assistants; influences. As each debate was reviewed, views expressed were recorded on matrices using the above headings and using one column per debate. The content of the two debates relating to the *ERA* (DES, 1988) were not found to fit this format, as the focus of the Act was not SEN, and hence notes were made separately for these. This process facilitated the act of identifying developing views about key aspects of SEN over the thirty year period. It was evident that there was an overlap between some of the groups of data, hence the final headings used to report the findings were: inclusion; statements; parental rights; LAs and funding; pedagogy and teacher training, and social model of disability.

An attempt was made to identify common and discrepant themes in the data, as a means of judging the significance of contributions to the debate. However, this proved difficult for several reasons. Firstly, the fact that an observation was made by one, or a minority of people, did not necessarily mean that the theme was discrepant; if the point was made by an MP well-regarded by colleagues, it may have influenced proceedings in the same way as similar views, held by a majority of people. Secondly, themes that were discrepant in an early debate could become common themes at a later date,

for example, concerns about the determining line for the purposes of issuing statements were discrepant in 1981, but common from 1992. Thirdly, MPs did on occasion state that due to lack of time they would not repeat comments made in earlier speeches, suggesting that discrepant themes may have had more supporters, given more time. In view of these difficulties, it was necessary to represent the range of views expressed, rather than trying to allocate a level of significance and influence to those views.

The 2005 debate was subjected to a further level of analysis to examine the context of practice. The focus of the debate was a call for a moratorium on the closure of special schools and a review of SEN provision. MPs from all parties, provided examples of situations in their own constituencies, which were catalogued and examined in detail.

Full references for each debate text are provided in the 'References'. For the purposes of the text, the debates will be referenced as follows:

- Hansard House of Commons: HC.
- Hansard House of Lords: HL.

Each will be followed by the Hansard volume number (see Table 4.1), and the column number for the specific section of text, hence: 'HC Debs. Vol., col.'; 'HL Debs. Vol., col.'. Volume numbers indicate the dates of debates.

The findings from the above process are reported below. These have been grouped according to the contexts of influence, policy text production and practice.

4.3 Results

4.3.1 Context of Influence

4.3.1.1 Possible influences on their Lordships' and MPs', thinking and practice

It might be expected that personal, direct experience would have a substantial impact on MPs' thinking; demonstrated in their often passionate speeches, and remarked on by colleagues (HC Debs. Vol.998, col.41, 43, 54; HC Debs. Vol.365, col.230, 240; HC Debs. Vol.435 col.848; HL Debs. Vol.495, col.1266). However, it is difficult to identify how influential the numerous sources of information evidenced in the texts, actually were.

Constituency affairs (HC Debs. Vol.998, col.89; HC Debs. Vol.302, col.590/1, 620, 622; HC Debs. Vol.365, col.228/9), research (HL Debs. Vol.376, col.801-872; HC Debs. Vol.998, col.47, 70; HC Debs. Vol.302, col.601, 608; HC Debs. Vol.365, col.217) and consultations were each referred to in contradictory ways. For example, from one perspective, constituency affairs were considered to provide expertise and a unique perspective on issues (HC Debs. Vol.302, col.631), whilst an alternative view was that MPs simply collided with issues (HC Debs. Vol.302, col.629).

An MP's personal perspective may have affected the strength of influence constituency matters had. Likewise published research may have been influential, however, it may have been identified and referenced to support a

view already held. The 2005 debate demonstrated how MPs found support for their opposing arguments in the same Warnock report (HC Debs. Vol.435, col.826/835). Governments referred to the value of consultations and the importance of contributions (HC Debs. Vol.998, col.27; HC Debs. Vol.302, col.580-636; HC Debs. Vol.365, col.215/6), whilst their opponents said: "It is often a means by which a public relations exercise is carried out, the Government already having decided what they want to do." (HC Debs. Vol.302, col.611; HC Debs. Vol.365, col.253, 296; HC Debs. Vol.123, col.791/797).

It could be expected that international legislation would influence policy decisions, however, few references were made to it in either House (HC Debs. Vol.998, col.49; HC Debs. Vol.210, col.1106; HC Debs. Vol.302, col.606; HC Debs. Vol.365, col.247). It is possible that legislation is taken into account by lawyers, at the drafting stage of the Bill. However, in the Chambers, their Lordships and MPs appeared to produce policies relevant to their constituents, as opposed to concerning themselves with an international audience. Even the influence of Party politics was missing from the majority of debates (HC Debs. Vol.302, col.629; HC Debs. Vol.417, Col. 1430/1/2), except the Opposition Day Motion, 2005. The Party political nature of this debate may have been due to Mr Cameron's bid for Party leadership.

Barry Sheerman suggested one influence:

> We get swayed by a fashion, and when a fashion is really pervasive and even pernicious, we do not even know that we are part of it.….Every party in the House was swayed by the fashion of inclusion, of which the original Warnock view was part, and it has continued to be a very strong fashion.
>
> (HC Debs. Vol.435, col.845).

The texts identified a number of sources of information. It could be considered that the most frequently referred to source would be the most influential. If so, direct, personal experience and involvement in SEN issues would be influential to MPs; perhaps in conjunction with the fashion of Warnock.

4.3.1.2 Inclusive policy

Inclusion was high on the international and national agenda in 1981. MPs were enthusiastic in their praise for the Warnock Committee's work (HC Debs. Vol.998, col.50); just one MP voiced concern that integration may not be the right approach (HC Debs. Vol.998, col.75, 76/7). Although others did not directly challenge integration as the way forward, it was hampered in subtle ways, for example, the Government concluded that:

> …wherever possible, without affecting the education of other children too adversely, without being withdrawn from certain special treatment which they should have, and without too great a demand on resources, such children should be in normal schools. That degree of integration should take place as far as possible.
>
> (HC Debs. Vol.998, col.95).

Whilst the *Education Act* (DES, 1981) legislated for mainstream education for children with SEN, its architects were cautious; able children were protected by conditions restricting access to mainstream provision by children with SEN, and special schools continued to provide education for children with SEN (HC Debs. Vol.998, col.30/1, 69). Even so, the SEN system quickly became intertwined with general education provision, to such an extent that the implementation of the *ERA* (DES, 1988), had a significant impact on children with SEN, even though SEN was not its focus, as noted by Paddy Ashdown:

“What choice will there be for the handicapped child whose special educational needs merit only four miserable lines in this monstrous Bill…” (HC Debs. Vol.123, col.803).

Supporters of the *ERA* (DES,1988) believed that testing would: improve standards; support low achievers and provide greater information and choice for parents (HL Debs. Vol.495, col.1287, 1309, 1310, 1312; HC Debs. Vol.123, col.810, 816, 820). Grant-maintained schools would have freedom to make decisions about spending priorities (HC Debs. Vol.123, col.772/6,) and the NC would provide a broad based and relevant curriculum (HC Debs. Vol.123, col.773, 775; HL Debs. Vol.495, col.1213).

Those opposed to the reforms, argued that testing would lead to schools choosing the brightest pupils (HC Debs. Vol.123, col.819; HL Debs. Vol.495, col.1240) and not supporting the least able and most expensive to educate (HL Debs. Vol.495, col.1240, 1286, 1326, 1347, 1461). It was predicted that grant-maintained schools would be for the middle classes; a reform opportunity for the better off (HC Debs. Vol.123, col.787, 794, 797, 803, 812, 819; HL Debs. Vol.495, col.1320/1). It was stated in both Houses, that unless the Bill was substantially amended, it could undo the work of the *Education Act* (DES, 1981) (HL Debs. Vol.495, col.1265, 1301, 1348; HC Debs. Vol.123, col.832).

The aims of the *ERA* (DES, 1988), and the *Education Act* (DES, 1981) conflicted (HC Debs. Vol.210, col.1124). Testing and league tables caused schools to select the brightest pupils, and focus support on children whose

progress could positively impact results (HC Debs. Vol.210, col.1078, 1096, 1110, 1117). As a consequence, parents demanded statements to obtain support for their children (HC Debs. Vol.210, col.1126), the special school population rose (HC Debs. Vol.210, col.1096), and integration suffered (HC Debs. Vol.210, col.1076, 1116/7, 1124), as predicted by their Lordships in 1988.

Inclusion had received an enthusiastic welcome in 1981, its implementation had been heavily criticised in 1992, and by 1997, enthusiasm had waned, and MPs were raising issues: the dilemma of balancing the needs of children with SEN and those without (HC Debs. Vol.302, col.601, 602); the lack of definition and vocabulary for SEN (HC Debs. Vol.302, col.601/2), and the contradiction of supporting inclusion, whilst still believing that special schools were needed: "Passionate support for an inclusive approach should not be interpreted by anyone as a belief that there will never be a need in the future for either statements or special schools…" (HC Debs. Vol.302, col.593).

This moderate stance created a dilemma in relation to the on-going role of special schools. Whilst they were spoken of in Parliament as centres of excellence, supporting mainstream colleagues and developing best practice (HC Debs. Vol.365, col.220, 243), special schools were also required to continue providing directly, albeit in reducing numbers, for children with severe and complex needs (HC Debs. Vol.302, col.582, 604). In 2001, reference was made to an implied agenda that would tilt the balance in favour of mainstream education for all children (HC Debs. Vol.365, col.279). MPs considered that

there should be a choice of provision; inclusion was not always the right approach, and should be for the benefit of children rather than for political correctness (HC Debs. Vol.365, col.229/30, 257, 266, 273, 279).

The Government did not give LAs specific direction in relation to the on-going role of special schools, believing that decisions regarding local provision needed to be made locally (HC Debs. Vol.417, col.1432; HC Debs. Vol.435, col.834, 853, 862). However, LAs interpreted Government policy as a requirement to move children to mainstream education, which led to reducing rolls in special schools, and increased per capita costs (HC Debs. Vol.435, col.826, 864, 868). On the one hand, special schools were to develop into centres of excellence; on the other, reducing rolls threatened their continuance on financial grounds (HC Debs. Vol.365, col.228, 266), and in some cases schools closed (HC Debs. Vol.435, col.863), causing Opposition members to accuse the Government of: "…an overt closure programme, with schools threatened explicitly by the authorities." (HC Debs. Vol.435, col.820)

Ministers denied this: "It is categorically not the Government's policy to close special schools and enforce inclusion whether or not it is right for the individual child." (HC Debs. Vol.435, col. 828/9, 848, 870).

By 2004, one MP called for a moratorium on the closure of special schools (HC Debs. Vol.417, col.1431); a request that was refused on the grounds that LAs must be free to identify and meet local needs. In 2005, there was a growing view that the SEN system needed an overhaul, and that the only way to

achieve that was to stop the closure of all special schools, until the right way forward had been identified (HC Debs. Vol.435, col.820). This debate demonstrated the complexities of the SEN system and why wholesale change would be difficult to achieve. Practice across LAs varied, some developing special provision, others contracting it; each acting on their own agenda. To have stopped the closure of special schools would have created difficulties where new buildings were replacing old, and empty, expensive schools could not be closed (HC Debs. Vol.435, col. 840/1, 844/5). Jacqui Smith observed that the problems were about the system, not buildings:

> …I do not believe that we should focus on buildings and institutions. It would be more useful to set down the guiding principles of the system, then design and reform it to meet those principles, rather than making the maintenance of the status quo the guiding principle…
>
> (HC Debs. Vol.435, col.829/30).

From her perspective, it was necessary to move SEN provision from where it was to where it needed to be, as opposed to the Opposition motion proposed, that would stop changes taking place, whilst revisions were made.

4.3.1.3 Defining MLD, statements of SEN

The statement of SEN, and the wider definition of learning difficulties, were welcomed in 1981 (HC Debs. Vol.998, col.58, 74). However, concerns were expressed that the failure to identify the line that would determine whether or not a child would be assessed for a statement (HC Debs. Vol.998, col.32, 51), would lead to disparity in the issue of statements across LAs (HC Debs. Vol.998, col.32). The determining line between children with SEN, and those with particular extra needs was considered a problem in itself, but there was an

additional issue related to the line being set differently between LAs (HC Debs. Vol.998, col.32). Neil Kinnock recognised this and referred to the Government's action:

> …they have decided to leave the weight of initiative to local authority resources and discretion, which will permit the worst to prevaricate and dodge without enabling the best, who would like to get better, to improve.
>
> (HC Debs. Vol.998, col.42).

Without some way to recognise different levels of SEN, and corresponding levels of provision, the statement became the means by which children with SEN were provided for and a cause of friction between parents who wanted statements for the funding they provided, and LAs, who had: "…no incentive to issue specific statements requiring it to provide teaching support for which it has no resources." (HC Debs. Vol.210, col.1075; HC Debs. Vol.435, col.838).

Debate surrounding the Audit Commission Report (Audit Commission/HMI, 1992) referred to the failure to define SEN causing: difficulties in the assessment of needs, and deciding when to issue statements (HC Debs. Vol.210, col.1075, 1080, 1095, 1108, 1115, 1119, 1123); inconsistencies in provision across LAs, which became known as the postcode lottery (HC Debs. Vol.210, col.1075, 1080, 1083, 1093/4, 1115, 1118, 1123); articulate, middle-class parents using the system to obtain statements, directing funds away from children with greatest need (HC Debs. Vol.210, col.1075, 1095); children with statements having lesser needs than those without, and factors other than need, having greater influence on the issue of statements. For example, the determination of parents and school, and whether parents were represented by lawyers or voluntary organisations (HC Debs. Vol.210, col.1075, 1078, 1084,

1123). LAs were reported to use vaguely worded statements to avoid long-term financial commitments (HC Debs. Vol.210, col.1080, 1082); to delay the statement process, or to refuse to assess children or issue statements (HC Debs. Vol.210, col.1082).

Parents reportedly considered the statement system unfair, being about budgets rather than educational need (HC Debs. Vol.435, col.865). However, statements were considered vital because they established a guarantee of entitlement (HC Debs. Vol.435, col.866) in any economic climate. Without defined criteria to identify when a statement was justified, demand was likely to be high. MPs acknowledged that articulate, well-resourced parents fought for statements, whilst children from broken homes where resources were lacking, failed to get attention (HC Debs. Vol.365, col.266; HC Debs. Vol.417, col.1440; HC Debs. Vol.435, col.840). Since budgets only allowed for statements for children with the most severe SEN, battles were inevitable. One MP remarked on the: "…economic incentives that changes in policy bring into play." (HC Debs. Vol.365, col.248).

Debate highlighted the inequities in the SEN system (HC Debs. Vol.210, col.1074, 1092) not only between children with SEN, but between the latter and the general school population:

> Practice and priorities in education budgets are changing to the extent that serious compromises are having to be made in provision for the general school population. There is a danger that we shall make even better provision for children with special educational needs, who enjoy the protection of a very specific set of legal requirements, to the possible detriment of other children.
>
> (HC Debs. Vol.302, col.628/9).

Despite these inequities, it has proved impossible to withdraw or replace statements. In 1997, MPs objected to a reduction in statements issued, because it would mean removing a legal entitlement to provision, and until mainstream provision was of sufficient quality to meet SEN, the legal entitlement was necessary (HC Debs. Vol.302, col.588, 592). In 2004, MPs wanted the system reviewed (HC Debs. Vol.417, col.1431, 1432), however, the Government refused to act, until time had been given to enable the Strategy for SEN (DfES, 2004) to have an affect (HC Debs. Vol.417, col.1434).

In 2005, the Government continued to argue that statements allowed funding to get to children with the most severe special needs (HC Debs. Vol.435, col.831). However, the Government was accused of doing: "…little or nothing to improve the statementing system because they want to see it wither on the vine." (HC Debs. Vol.435, col.839).

4.3.1.4 Parental rights

Parental rights have been strengthened in law throughout the period under review. In 1981, it was declared that: "…parental wishes should be respected wherever possible." (HC Debs. Vol.998, col.30). In 1997, MPs were still referring to parents becoming empowered and supported; that they would: "…no longer be the last, if not often forgotten, element in the equation." (HC Debs. Vol.302, col.604/5).

The law required LAs to: facilitate parental choice of provision (HC Debs. Vol.998, col.45, 51, 58, 69); encourage home/school partnerships; provide parent partnerships and dispute resolution mechanisms (HC Debs. Vol.365, col.222); develop multi-agency working, and include parents as part of the team (HC Debs. Vol.302, col.593, 604/5, 616).

However, evidence provided by MPs suggested that whilst Government legislated for parental rights, parents had the difficulties of raising children with SEN, whilst simultaneously fighting the system to get the support that was theoretically available, from officials who would not tell the truth, and were curbed by financial constraints they would not acknowledge (HC Debs. Vol.417, col.1436, 1440). The Government agreed there was substance in that perception (HC Debs. Vol.417, col.1436); parents were often left outside the decision-making process and felt alienated (HC Debs. Vol.417, col.1432; HC Debs. Vol.435, col.826, 852). Multi-agency working and TAC initiatives were introduced to address these issues. The importance of a co-ordinated, professional team to work with parents was emphasised (HC Debs. Vol.417, col.1431-3, 1436).

4.3.1.5 LAs and funding

There has been continuing debate regarding lack of funding for the implementation of policy (HL Debs. Vol.376, col. 833, 855, 857; HC Debs. Vol.998, col.37/8, 54). In 1981 the Government suggested that legislation could establish a legal framework and affect public opinion, thereby enabling

action when funding became available (HC Debs. Vol.998, col.72, 94) and secondly, that LAs had scope to review the cost-effectiveness of existing arrangements, and re-deploy funding (HC Debs. Vol.998, col.28). In 1992, the Government indicated that since SEN spending had increased, the problems of lack of funding must lie with LA spending decisions (HC Debs. Vol.210, col.1083, 1091).

During the period examined, disparity in provision between LAs was a constant issue (HC Debs. Vol.302, col.582, 592, 618). In 1992, the Audit Commission (Audit Commission/HMI, 1992) noted that LAs were caught between either: meeting the cost of SEN provision, risking overspending and having their budgets capped, or containing spending and remaining in their budget, but failing to meet their legal obligation to provide for children with statements (HC Debs. Vol.210, col.1078, 1116, 1120, 1125). It was also recognised that LAs needed to balance provision between the whole school population: a high demand for statements impacted negatively on budgets for other pupils; maintaining special provision whilst developing mainstream provision created financial tensions. It was anticipated that the *SENDA, 2001* would correct the disparities in provision (HC Debs. Vol.365, col.240), however, the evidence demonstrated that it remained an on-going concern (HC Debs. Vol.417, col.1435, 1440).

The Government also faced funding dilemmas: delegating funds directly to schools could threaten the provision of LA services (HC Debs. Vol.302, col.616, 634/5); reducing funding for the statement system and focusing on the

improvement of mainstream provision (HC Debs. Vol.302, col.584, 616) could cause an increased demand for statements (HC Debs. Vol.302, col.625); a reduction in the special school population created an increase in per capita costs for special provision, leaving a reducing population receiving an ever-increasing proportion of the budget; a fact difficult to justify in a context of inclusion and equity (HC Debs. Vol.365, col.249).

The need for improved monitoring and accountability for SEN spending at LA and school levels has also been a matter of on-going debate (HC Debs. Vol.302, col.599, 616, 634/5; HC Debs. Vol.365, col.280).

4.3.1.6 Pedagogy and teacher training

Teachers with the necessary skills to teach children with SEN, were critical to the success of inclusion (HC Debs. Vol.365, col.242, 270), and yet debates failed to provide evidence of training having been undertaken. Comments regarding: the need for monitoring and evaluation to be undertaken to meet individual needs (HC Debs. Vol.210, col.1101); the lack of inclusive practice making it difficult for trainee teachers to gain experience of working with children with SEN (HC Debs. Vol.302, col.636); the need to use appropriate teaching methods (HC Debs. Vol.302, col.591, 593); the use of unqualified support staff to support children with SEN (HC Debs. Vol.417, col.1433; HC Debs. Vol.302, col.585, 607, 625), and a lack of skills, being blamed for the inability of teachers to meet the requirements of statements (HC Debs.

Vol.435, col.833), suggested that appropriate and/or effective training was not being carried out.

The Government failed to fund training in 1981 (HC Debs. Vol.998, col.42, 47), and in 1992 there was a call for more teachers to enable smaller group sizes for children with SEN (HC Debs. Vol.210, col.1101). From 1997, successive Education Ministers announced training investment (HC Debs. Vol.302, col.585, 607, 617, 618), however, each subsequent debate indicated that the need for training remained (HC Debs. Vol.365, col.242, 270; HC Debs. Vol.417, col. 1437/8). By 2004, the Government agreed that there was:

> …a massive issue involving both initial training for teachers and those in other professions, and in-service training and continuous professional development…. There is a great deal of work to be done, and we must make steady progress to raise standards across the whole range.
> (HC Debs. Vol.417, col. 1435).

The Warnock Report (DES, 1978) noted that without a specific programme of training aimed at meeting SEN, it would take forty years to reach a point where all teachers were trained (HC Debs. Vol.998, col.91). Thirty three years later, the Government is still trying to resolve this issue.

4.3.1.7 A changing model

The implementation of the Warnock Report (DES, 1978) reflected a change in thinking about special education. The Government spoke of removing the stigma of handicap, enhancing the role of parents and seeing children as individuals (HC Debs. Vol.998, col.35). Some MPs referred to the change in philosophy that the *Education Act* (DES, 1981) would require of competitive,

academic establishments (HC Debs. Vol.998, col.88), and the need for tolerance and understanding in society (HC Debs. Vol.998, col.65, 73, 84, 85).

The move to a social model brought with it recognition of the importance of environmental factors in assessing children's needs (HC Debs. Vol.998, col.29), facilitating a change in the school environment, rather than in the child (HC Debs. Vol.998, col.87). Concern for recognising individuals was stated in the Government's Strategy for SEN (DfES, 2004); to suggest that one group should be dealt with in one way, and another group, another way, was not considered right. There was a need for high quality judgement in each case and blanket policies in respect of provision were unacceptable (HC Debs. Vol.417, col. 1432).

SEN terminology was seen to change as evidenced by changing texts across time. Gradually terms used for different types of difficulty or disability, were replaced with SEN, or MPs referred to known conditions that could be understood, such as autism or attention deficit disorders. It was commented that if there was a truly comprehensive education system that catered for the diverse needs of all pupils, the term SEN would be unnecessary (HC Debs. Vol.302, col.592). The difficulty of defining and hence talking about the needs of the MLD group, may be the reason that references to MLD in debates were few.

4.3.2 Context of Policy Text Production

This section provides an indication of the ways in which Government tries to control LA activity and attempts to influence attitudes in society through policy. It also demonstrates the importance of clarity of text.

Debate in 1976 provided an example of the considerations necessary when deciding the type of policy text to be used by Government to cause a change in practice. Debate centred around the issue of school information by LAs and whether the exact information required should be included in legislation, or circular. In essence, their Lordships had to consider whether LAs would act because the Government had the power to force them to do so, or because the law placed a duty on them (HL Debs. Vol.376, col.823, 827, 829). The Government preferred the circular approach in the first instance, resorting to a more forceful response if necessary.

Another way that legislation is used by Government was suggested in 1981. It was noted that to achieve its aims, a change in attitudes was required, and that this would be achieved more quickly, if the law reflected those desired attitudes (HC Debs. Vol.998, col.35). This was reinforced when Ministers noted that whilst there was no funding to implement policy, it could still be working to affect public opinion (HC Debs. Vol.998, col.72, 94).

Terminology and clarity of policy are of major concern in the achievement of policy outcomes. Phrases such as “use their best endeavours…to secure”,

were considered too weak, vague and discretionary and were predicted to lead to wide variation in standards across LAs (HC Debs. Vol.998, col.51/2). This prediction was confirmed in 1997 when it was noted: "…that in some local authorities a parent's right to obtain an inclusive mainstream education might depend more on where the parent lives than on the needs of the child." (HC Debs. Vol.302, col.582), referring to the widely varying interpretations of policy in evidence across LAs. This was considered in relation to the future of special schools in 2001. It was evident that some LAs were implementing an inclusive agenda that was leading to their closure. When the Government denied any closure policy, it was suggested that, if the Government wanted special schools to remain open, it should be written in the Bill (HC Debs. Vol.365, col.228).

The importance of clarity in stating the intention of policy during debate was emphasised by the legal case, Pepper v Hart, 1993, which led to the use of Hansard Volumes by courts when deciding on interpretation of the intention of policy (HC Debs. Vol.365, col.295; HC Library, SN/PC/392). For this reason, it was argued that MPs should be given sufficient time in Committee, to address the construction and intention of clauses, and to properly explain their meaning (HC Debs. Vol.365, col.295).

In 2004, a court case challenged the legality of sections of the SEN Toolkit (Royal Courts of Justice, 2003). This case demonstrated the complexity of policy text production in terms of legislation and accompanying guidance

materials. In this case it again required the intervention of the courts to clarify policy (HC Debs. Vol.417, col.1431).

Another example of the issues of interpretation in SEN policy came in 2005. The SEN Code of Practice(DfES, 2001) stated that children had a "stronger right" to be educated in mainstream schools. It was suggested that someone having a right to something implied an obligation on the provider to provide it, possibly to the detriment of other things; so a stronger right to mainstream schooling suggested: "an overriding inclination, irrespective of anything else, to increase inclusion in mainstream schools." (HC Debs. Vol.435, col.848).

The Government uses policy texts in varying forms to direct practice and affect public opinion. The evidence given above demonstrates the importance of clear terminology and clarity of meaning in texts and the lack of each seen in Government policy text. The result being widely differing practice in LAs and schools.

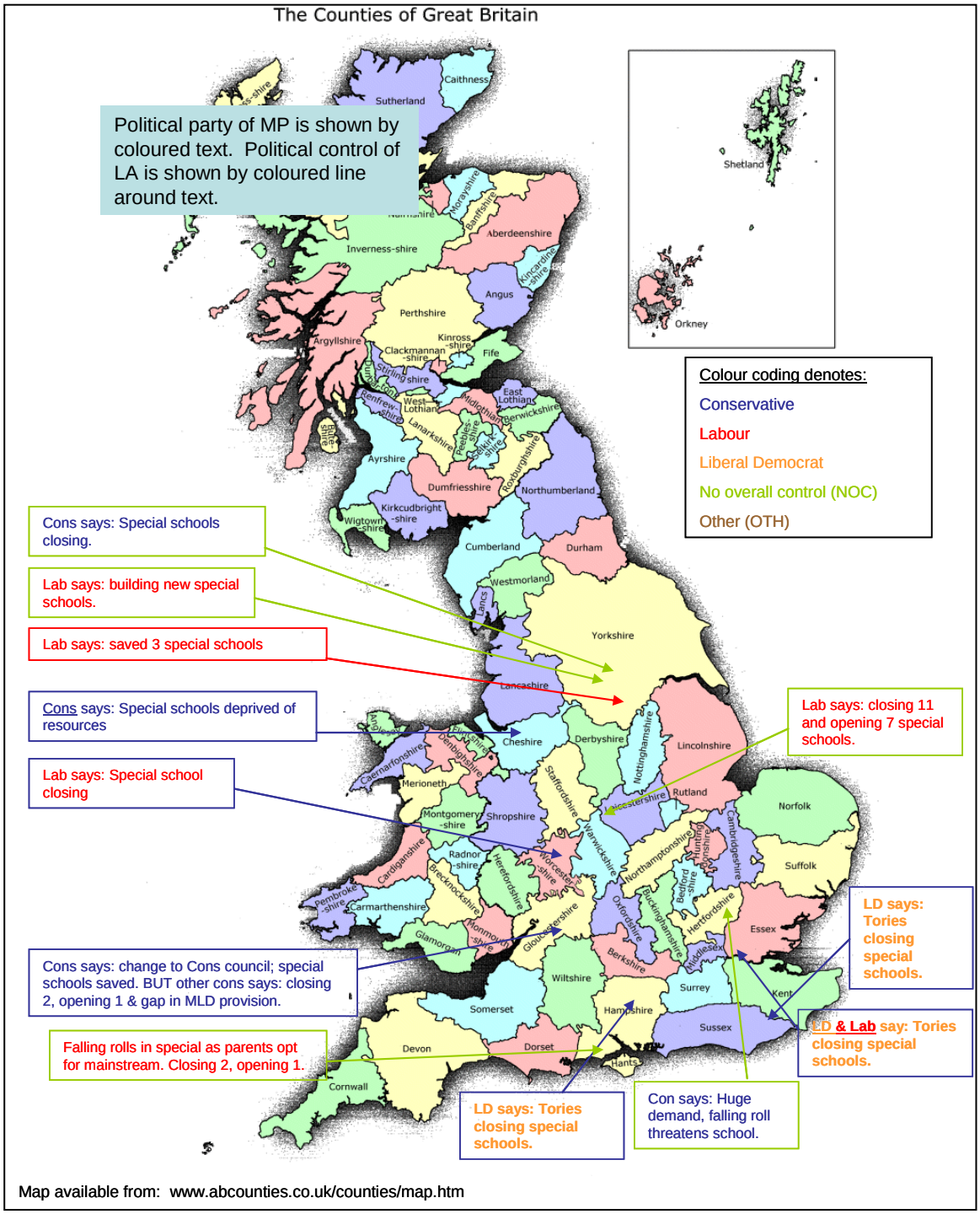
4.3.3 Context of Practice

To investigate the context of practice as described by MPs, it was decided to focus the analysis of practice on the 2005 debate (HC Debs. Vol.435, col.820-876). The more recent date made the evidence more relevant to the research questions and the use of all examples provided in the debate addressed the risk of researcher bias in analysing the findings.

The focus of the debate was a call for a review of SEN and a moratorium on the closure of special schools. During the debate MPs provided examples of SEN practice in their constituencies. The appropriate LA was identified and indicated on a map of England, showing a spread south from Leeds to Hampshire and west from London to Powys. The aim of the analysis was to identify whether: any patterns existed in relation to closing special schools; LAs controlled by different political Parties engaged in similar or different types of activity; MPs spoke favourably of LAs controlled by their political Party and/or about educational activity independent of party politics. The Labour Government had been accused by the Conservative Party of having a policy to close special schools. It was hoped that examination of reported practice would provide relevant evidence.

Initially, examples of practice relating specifically to the opening or closure of special schools were placed on the map (figure 4.2). The evidence suggested that a greater number of special schools were closing than were opening. However, whether this was due to a specific Government directive could not be verified: the evidence did not indicate any patterns with regard to Party political behaviour. For example, it might be expected that a Labour controlled LA might adhere to a Labour Government directive, but the evidence did not show this. Other examples indicated that whilst special schools were closing, new schools were opening, albeit in reduced numbers. This suggested the possibility that activity supported inclusive policy, rather than a policy to close special schools.

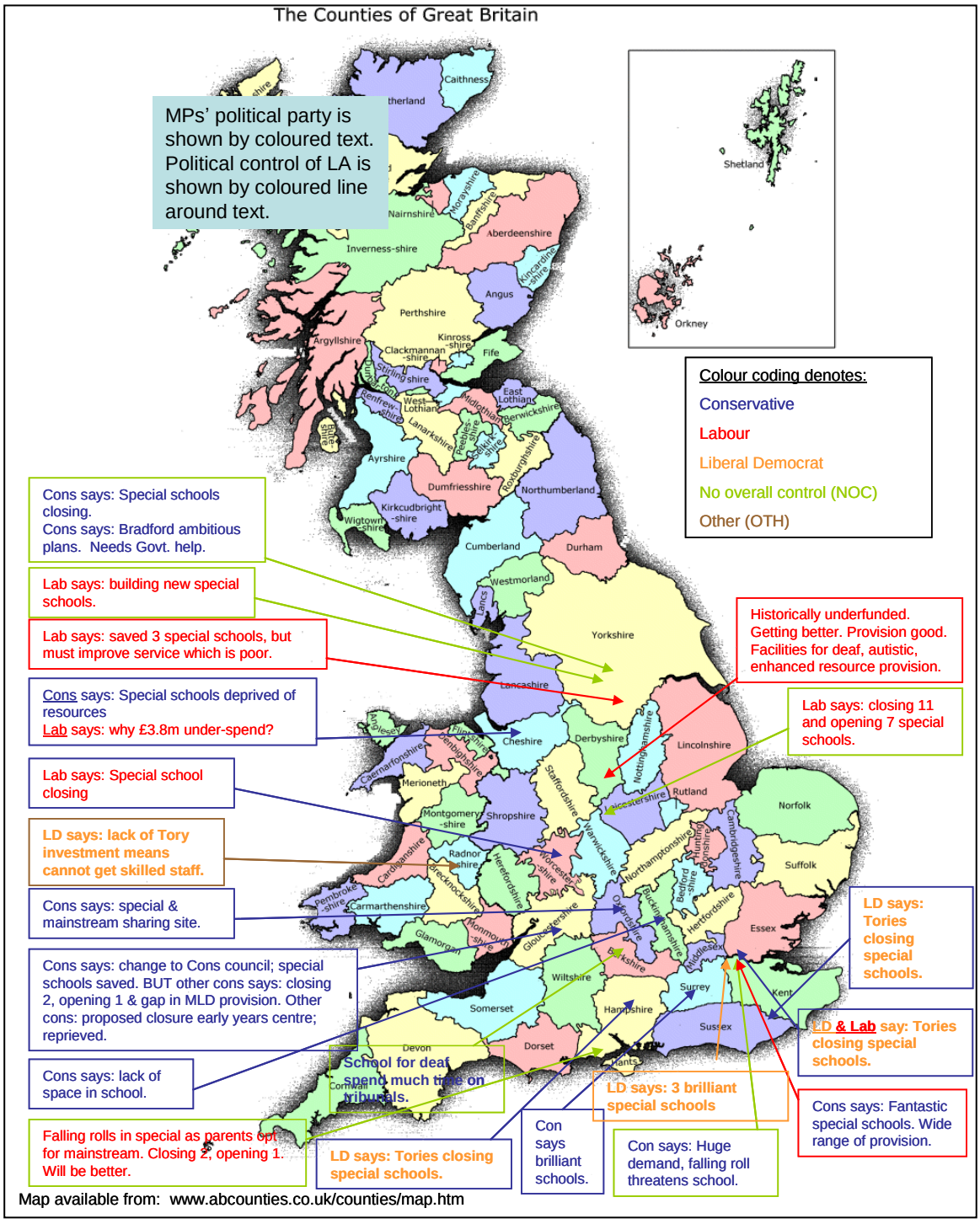
Figure 4.2: Comments made by MPs in relation to opening/closure of special schools during the 2005 debate.



At the next stage of analysis, all of the examples of practice provided by MPs were added to the map (figure 4.3). This gave a more holistic perspective on current practice demonstrating that, whilst special schools were closing, LAs were engaged in other activity in relation to SEN provision. For example, in some areas the range of provision was expanding; excellent schools were recognised, and LAs were reviewing provision to meet local needs. Elsewhere, special schools were closing, a lack of facilities and resources was observed, whilst budgets were under-spent, and service to parents was poor.

Focusing specifically on findings relating to special school closures could give the impression of a move to close special schools. Viewing the data as a whole provided a more complex picture of LAs acting in accordance with local needs. There was no evidence consistent with a trend towards closing special schools, either in relation to geographical area, or political allegiance. However, the activity described did appear to be conducive with an interpretation of inclusive policy. The Conservative Party claim that the Government had a policy to close special schools was not therefore supported. It seemed more likely that LAs were interpreting inclusive policy and acting according to their perception of local needs. This highlighted a dilemma for Government: it required LAs to act in local interests, however, in doing so, the range and quality of provision varied across LAs.

Figure 4.3: Examples of practice provided by MPs during the 2005 debate.



4.4 Discussion

Since Warnock, SEN and mainstream provision have become interwoven. None of the debate texts analysed focused on just one element of SEN; discussion of one always incorporated elements of others. For example, to discuss statements inevitably involved reference to funding.

Statements provided SEN children with a legal entitlement to funding perhaps, it was suggested, to the detriment of the general school population. The inequity existed not just between children with and without statements, but between children with and without SEN. During times of economic hardship, children with statements were reported to fare best, whilst others felt the effects of budget cuts. This created an on-going dilemma for LAs who were responsible for education provision for all children within a finite budget; whether they should fund SEN and mainstream provision equally or whether children with SEN should receive greater support. MPs referred to equality in provision, but only at a policy level, they failed to explain the practical application of equality.

With each policy, Governments placed greater demands on LAs to meet the challenges of SEN provision financially and practically, for example, providing a knowledgeable and skilled workforce; supporting parents in their choice of provision and in their on-going role in their child's education; providing local services to support schools in their practice. LAs were criticised frequently in debates for their performance with regard to SEN, accused of following hidden

agendas and interpreting policy to meet their own needs. However, MPs also criticised Government for failing to provide direction for IE, most notably in relation to defining the trigger points for different levels of SEN and in particular the level that warrants the issue of statements. Warnock (DES, 1978) advocated a move away from the use of categories in relation to children's SEN, however, this created issues in identifying levels of SEN warranting additional support as mentioned and in terms of the vocabulary needed to discuss SEN. It was noticeable that MPs referred frequently to known terms such as autism, however reference to MLD within the texts was minimal. This may have been because of the difficulty in defining such a diverse group, but also because their needs were similarly diverse and to group them as one was unhelpful. Lobby groups worked to achieve an aim, for example, funding for a particular provision that would benefit a group. The difficulties experienced by children with MLD are diverse, provision that works for one may not be appropriate for another. This may explain the absence of any powerful pressure group acting on their behalf.

This failure to define has been recognised as being responsible for the persistent inconsistency of provision across LAs, in terms of levels of provision and funding. It was this inconsistency that was reported to have led parents to demand statements, which they perceived to be the only way that they could guarantee provision for their child.

Statements have become a dilemma of their own; they provide a legal entitlement to provision in an imperfect education system. To remove them

would leave children with SEN unsupported and MPs made clear that attempts in this direction would be opposed. Statements were needed it was reported, because in general, provision was of insufficient quality to meet the needs of children with SEN. To improve provision required increased resources and most significantly, training, a fact made clear by Warnock (DES, 1978) and subsequent Governments. To resource the improvement of mainstream SEN provision meant reducing funding elsewhere. In times when funding was restricted, the demand for statements was reported to rise, particularly it was noted on several occasions, demand from middle-class, articulate parents who could use the system to their advantage and afford the support of lawyers. Needless to say, this was recognised to be to the detriment of children with SEN in single-parent households where they were less able to fight for their entitlement. However, once again, it was the system itself that perpetuated this inequity. It can be seen therefore, that reducing SEN budgets to fund mainstream improvement to the point at which statements would not be needed, may have the perverse outcome of increasing demand for statements.

It is not surprising that MPs reported that the issue of statements had become something of a battleground between parents and LAs. Whilst MPs criticised LAs for their failure or delay in issuing statements, it should be recognised that successive Governments had placed a number of burdens on LAs. They were to improve mainstream provision for SEN, whilst simultaneously funding statements required because of the failings in mainstream provision in addition to maintaining special provision because of the Government's desire to provide parents with choice. Here there is another dilemma: inclusive policy has

effected a reduction and change in the special school population, causing some MPs to accuse the Government of an implied agenda in favour of inclusion and the closure of special schools. However, the content of that same policy gives parents a right to choose the education they want for their child, necessitating the continuation of special provision in some form.

With a reduced population, there has been debate about what form special provision should take. The consensus appeared to favour special schools providing education directly for children with the most complex needs, whilst supporting the development of practice in mainstream provision through outreach services.

Debate texts provided no evidence that the Government had a policy to close all special schools, indeed there were many references throughout, to the continuing requirement for special provision for some children. It was suggested that if the Government did not want to close special schools it should make that explicit in policy, the implication being that not to do so left the policy open to (mis)interpretation. Debates provided examples of situations where policy text had been challenged in the courts due to its ambiguity, despite clauses and schedules being reviewed in minute detail in Committee stages of the policy process. MPs were aware of the importance of clarity, however, as Bowe *et al* (1992) explained, policy text must be general rather than specific to be relevant in many contexts, leaving it prey to interpretation.

This discussion began with policy and closes on the same theme. The *Education Act* (DES, 1981) had a role to play in changing attitudes. It and subsequent legislation has been interpreted by practitioners with different experience and knowledge, in different contexts. Each has created his/her own interpretation and enacted policy according to that interpretation, hence the differing practice evidenced in 2005. However, despite the policies and debates, practice appears to have changed little over the period in question; the dilemmas and tensions identified have remained the same throughout as demonstrated by the reoccurrence of issues in debates, such as: funding, training, the issues brought about by statements and lack of SEN definition. It could be argued that policy text should have been more specific to address these issues, however, policy must be applicable in all contexts. In one area the issue of ambiguity cannot be blamed on policy text, that is in relation to the definition of levels of SEN that warrant different levels of provision. This was recognised as an issue before the legislation was published in 1981. The failing here was not of text, but of policy-makers.

4.5 Conclusion

The different facets of SEN provision are inextricably interwoven in the education system as a whole. Whilst MPs demand reviews of the SEN system, it would be almost impossible to bring about wholesale change due to the pervasive nature of the system. Despite its inherent inequities and failings, it appears that Governments can only continue to tinker with the system as

they have been doing since 1981, leaving LAs, practitioners and parents to get the best from it that they can.

This chapter has explored thirty years of debate in the Houses of Parliament. It has illustrated the developing context of SEN education, its complexities and challenges, its areas of contention and of agreement. MPs have shown themselves to be knowledgeable in the lives of their constituents, and prepared to speak out on their behalf.

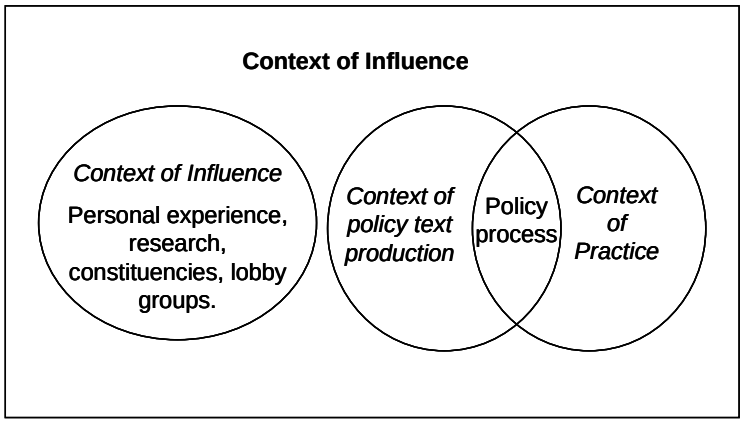
The policy model (Bowe *et al*, 1992) is seen operating in this chapter. Texts demonstrate the process of policy creation through consultation, debate, negotiation and publication. MPs speeches give examples of their sources of information, and their desire to influence the direction of policy.

The policy texts as interrogated by MPs give an insight into the clarity required for policy text production. The reference to the use of Hansard records to inform decisions regarding policy intent further illustrates the importance of thorough debate and subsequent clarity of text.

With regard to the context of practice, it is clear that interpretation of policy text is an issue over which MPs have little, if any, control. In preparing the policy text, MPs must consider the context within which the policy will be interpreted and implemented. The circular nature of the policy cycle was illustrated through the challenges of policy texts in law and MPs reports of practice in their constituencies, each bringing practice back into the context of influence.

This analysis supports the view that each context in the policy cycle has within it an element of the others (Mainardes and Marcondes, 2009). Focusing on the context of influence (figure 4.4), it is evident that there exists within this element a context of practice that relates to the process of policy development; a context of influence relating to sources of information that influence individual MPs, as opposed to overall influences on policy such as international legislation. In addition there is a context of policy text production that is linked to the policy process: the creation of text to facilitate the process of policy-making prior to the creation of policy text for publication. This is linked with the practice of the policy making process.

Figure 4.4: Elements of the Context of Influence in SEN



The next chapter reviews policies developed by the LA concerned with the research, to identify the influence of Government policy at local levels.

CHAPTER 5

LOCAL AUTHORITY POLICY

5.0 Introduction

In this chapter, LA policy and strategy documents relating to SEN were examined. In the Hansard texts examined there were many references to LAs acting without integrity, and moulding policy to meet their own needs. The evidence gathered in this chapter offers an opportunity to see how the participant LA responded to Government policy and legislation, in providing for children with additional educational needs (AEN) and SEN.

5.1 Aims

It is at the point of interpretation and enactment that policy can be manipulated to meet local requirements. The analysis of the participant Authority's inclusion policy and strategy documents, provided an opportunity to see initially how national policy had been interpreted and then to identify how the LA planned to enact that policy in order to achieve the perceived aims of the national policy.

With regards to the framework of Bowe *et al's* (1992) model of policy making, the evidence in this chapter will fall within the contexts of policy text production and practice as the LA interprets and creates policy to be enacted.

The data from the documents analysed was used to address research questions:

1. What is the policy to practice context for inclusion of pupils with MLD?
2. How do schools (head teachers and teachers) implement the policy regarding the inclusion of pupils with MLD?

5.2 Methods

5.2.1 Participants

Evidence for this chapter was provided by the participating LA. The inclusion policy and strategies were developed by teams within the LA, representing different elements of SEN provision.

5.2.2 Material

Four documents were analysed:

- the Authority's inclusion policy statement (LA[b], 2007);
- an inclusion strategy document, the 'Framework for Action', that identified the status of IE in the Borough, and defined future actions (LA[a], 2007);
- the 'funding arrangements for additional and special educational needs', that explained the criteria for the allocation of funds, and called for consultation on proposals for a review of the funding formulae (LA[c], 2007), and

- a further funding document that described the ‘accountability and use of AEN and SEN resources’ (LA[d], 2007).

5.2.3 Procedure

The documents analysed were all those relating to SEN policy and funding available from the LA website. Since the documents did not have publication dates, references to them incorporate the date of download from the website: 2007.

5.2.4 Analysis

The four documents were read initially to achieve an understanding of the LA’s general approach to AEN and SEN. They were read a second time with research questions 1 and 2 in mind (an a priori approach), namely to achieve an understanding of the:

- perceived context within which the LA policy was developed, and influences upon decision-making;
- LA’s organisational view of mainstream education for children with SEN;
- issue of parental choice in children’s education;
- context within which statements were issued;
- funding of AEN and SEN;
- roles and responsibilities of the LA and schools, as decided by the LA, and
- views regarding pedagogy and teacher training.

Charts were created for each document with headings covering the above elements listed. As the documents were read for the second time, findings were allocated to identified elements. The resulting data were then analysed and key themes extracted.

5.3 Results

The documents analysed represented the LA's organisational view of AEN and SEN education, and the action in progress or planned. There were, therefore, no discrepant themes to be reported.

5.3.1 Influences on LA thinking and practice

Frequent detailed references were made to the: Government's Strategy for SEN (DfES, 2004); legislation; reports from the DfES (LA[a], 2007) and Audit Commission (LA[c], 2007) and research (LA[b], 2007) suggesting a detailed knowledge of SEN policy and published research.

A desire to achieve its goals in a professional manner was demonstrated in the LAs decisions to work in conjunction with a university to develop the 'Framework for Action', with the Audit Commission in relation to outcome measures and in deciding to contribute to research relating to AEN and SEN funding (LA[a], 2007). In addition there was evidence that the views of practitioners, parents and pupils were sought.

The requirement to implement a range of initiatives in parallel, placed time pressures on staff that were reported to impact negatively on activity to develop inclusive practice. Conflicting Government policies, the use of league tables; the focus of school inspections, and the procedure of naming failing schools, were also reported to have a negative impact on inclusive practice (LA[a], 2007).

5.3.2 Inclusive policy

Inclusion was referred to in documents in terms of: "…a society without barriers…" (LA[b], 2007:1); the education of all children in mainstream settings; the requirements it places on settings to adapt to provide for students with SEN, and the benefits it provides for everyone (LA[b], 2007). It was described as a process rather than a fixed state (LA[b], 2007:2).

The LA stated the Government's view that inclusive schools provided a foundation for life in a diverse society, and that the Government therefore promoted inclusion where possible (LA[a], 2007). A view supported by the LA who wanted to be recognised for their equal opportunities for all approach to education. Policy stated the right of children with SEN to equal membership of the same groups as other children and of their peers to learn that children with SEN should not be treated differently (LA[b], 2007).

LA policy identified the goal of improving mainstream provision to facilitate increased inclusion, with an ultimate aim of all children being educated in their

local school (LA[b], 2007; LA[c], 2007). Despite this assertion, the LA expressed in the texts the views that inclusion may never be fully achieved (LA[b], 2007) and that for some children mainstream provision was not appropriate (LA[a], 2007).

The LA did not support the closure of special schools, seeing them as necessary to provide choice for parents (LA[a], 2007), although the situation would remain under review to ensure that needs were met and IE developed (LA[b], 2007). The future role of special schools was defined as contributing to local and national inclusion objectives, by developing as providers of education for children with the most complex needs, and: "…as centres of excellence to support mainstream schools in including children with more complex needs." (LA[a], 2007:26; LA[c], 2007).

Head teachers and governors of special schools were reported to support this policy, and the service provided to mainstream schools was reported to be valued by mainstream staff (LA[a], 2007). The evidence demonstrated a desire on the part of the LA to retain their statutory responsibilities for special provision, whilst delegating managerial and budgetary responsibilities to the governing bodies of the special schools (LA[c], 2007).

To further increase inclusion and reduce numbers in special provision, the LA asked mainstream schools to identify a low incidence SEN for which they would be prepared to take responsibility. The LA referred to the unrealistic

idea that all schools should be able to meet all needs; designated schools enabled some schools to focus on more complex needs (LA[c], 2007).

5.3.3 Statements of SEN

In line with Government requirements an aim of inclusive policy was to reduce the number of statements issued and the number of appeals received (LA[a], 2007). In comparison with other LAs, the Borough was at the higher end of the scale in issuing statements, but at the lower end of the range in relation to the rate of tribunals (LA[c], 2007). Policy suggested that statements were provided in only the most severe and complex cases.

The LA wanted to achieve a situation whereby parents did not request statements for their children solely for the funding they would attract (LA[c], 2007). It appeared that parents of children in Year 5 applied for statements to enable them to seek an education for their child outside the Borough.

By providing schools with additional funds to support children with SEN, it was suggested that the need for statements should be reduced. Whilst schools were not directed in how the funds should be spent, they were expected to use their best endeavours to meet needs. The LA held a statutory responsibility to ensure that children with statements received the support stated; any failure to provide on the part of the school, could result in the LA suspending or reclaiming funds (LA[c], 2007).

5.3 4 Parent Services

The LA Parent Partnership service was described as an example of effective practice. Work through this service focused on empowering parents, providing information, developing home-school links and the appropriate skills and confidence to enable parents to take an active role in their child's education. The LA demonstrated its desire to involve parents by conducting surveys and publishing the findings (LA[a], 2007).

5.3.5 Funding

The principles guiding the allocation of resources in the Borough included: supporting inclusion where possible; facilitating early intervention; being open, transparent and equitable; safeguarding the rights and entitlements of those with SEN; matching the allocation of resources with responsibilities for outcomes, and allocating AEN and SEN funding by applying the same formulae to each, thus supporting inclusive thinking (LA[a], 2007).

The LA included amongst its responsibilities the requirement to: identify, assess and provide for SEN; ensure high quality support and guidance; inform parents, co-ordinate provision, and ensure cost-effectiveness (LA[a], 2007; LA[c], 2007).

The LA allocated almost one quarter of the total education budget to AEN and SEN provision during 2003/2004 (LA[a], 2007), making it amongst the highest

spending LAs on SEN. In accordance with Government directives, funds were delegated and managed by schools so far as possible. The funding method and formula adopted for the allocation of funds were important in terms of achieving an equitable and effective distribution of funds. Government funding was divided into two blocks; one held by the LA to meet central spending, and the second allocated by the LA to schools (LA[c], 2007).

Budgets for mainstream schools consisted of four elements:

- age-weighted pupil unit (AWPU), that is, the basic school budget;
- additional funding for AEN and SEN related to social deprivation;
- additional funding for significant high incidence SEN (commonly-occurring disabilities) (including MLD) and
- for significant low incidence needs (infrequently-occurring disabilities) (children with statements which could include MLD) (LA[c], 2007).

Two reasons were given for providing additional funds on top of the AWPU: to be effective in terms of directing support to children with learning difficulties and thereby raising standards and achievement, and to be equitable in terms of providing for the full range of AEN and social deprivation (LA[c], 2007:10).

The additional amounts paid to schools in relation to AEN and SEN and significant high incidence SEN, were calculated using a formula incorporating indicators of need, chosen because of their high correlation with SEN and easy availability. Amounts allocated were at the higher end of the range in comparison with other LAs. The LA made a conscious decision not to allocate these funds according to, for example, statements or SAP, because it was

considered that such an approach provided schools with a reason to register children with SEN; in effect rewarding poor performance (LA[c], 2007).

The additional funds allocated for significant low incidence SEN were calculated according to a formula used for the allocation of funds to special schools and to designated schools, with the aim of ensuring equity of provision for pupils with similar needs, whether they attended mainstream or special provision. It was suggested that this approach was key in promoting inclusion to parents (LA[c], 2007).

Seventy per cent of the special schools' budget was allocated based upon the number of places a school could offer, rather than upon occupancy rates. Each place was assigned a Band of Learning Difficulty (BLD) of which there were five increasing in severity, that reflected the severity of the SEN of the pupil expected to fill the place. For each BLD, examples were provided of the SEN that would be included in that BLD, with its associated level of provision in terms of: curriculum differentiation and planning; pupil support; pastoral/welfare support; specialist equipment and support agencies (LA[c], 2007).

Bands 3, 4 and 6 incorporated MLD. At each level the severity of the SEN increased as shown in table 5.1. Initially MLD was referred individually, but as the level of severity increased, MLD was associated with additional difficulties. The single term MLD was not defined. From the text it was evident that MLD was included in high incidence SEN for children without statements; in low

incidence needs for children with statements and within the latter, MLD featured in three separate BLD. Each was funded differently, however MLD was not defined for any of them.

Table 5.1: Bands of Learning Difficulty showing SEN included in each BLD (LA[c], 2007: 22-24).

Band 3	SEN would include: • MLD • Learning Difficulty compounded by moderate hearing, visual or communication impairment, or moderate EBD • Health or medical difficulties leading to primary care needs • Specific Learning Difficulties

Band 4	SEN would include:
	• Physical Disabilities requiring significant adaptation or support
	• Profound sensory or communication impairment
	• Severe health problems requiring continuous monitoring
	• MLD as well as:
	  ○ physical disability
	  ○ sensory or communication impairment
	  ○ EBD

Band 6	SEN would include:
	• Severe Learning Difficulties arising from global developmental delay
	• MLD as well as:
	  ○ Severe EBD/autism, e.g. extremely challenging behaviour
	  ○ Severe physical disability.
	  ○ Severe health problems and medical condition
	  ○ Primary care needs
	  ○ Severe sensory or communication impairment.

Funding of the designated schools demonstrated how the LA had to move funds around within the existing budget to accommodate the new expense. The cost was to be met in part, by a reduction in the special school budget, achieved either by increasing the income from children coming into schools from outside the Borough, or by reducing the number of available places in

special schools where there was excess capacity. The latter reduction in places had to be balanced with the requirement to increase the range of provision within the Borough, and reduce the number of children attending special schools outside the Borough (LA[c], 2007).

The importance of measuring the cost-effectiveness of SEN provision was stated (LA[d], 2007), in addition to the requirement for schools to be accountable for their spending. Outcome measures were considered in detail. The LA wanted to measure the impact of provision as opposed to the quantity of support and to inform provision planning and identify training needs (LA[a], 2007). Many outcome measures were identified including: an increase in inclusion and the promotion of inclusion by special schools; an extended range of provision; an increase in staff completing training. A review by the Audit Commission recommended that the LA should additionally monitor and evaluate individual pupil programmes (LA[a], 2007).

5.3.6 Pedagogy and teacher training

The LA recognised the requirement incorporated in the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001) for all teachers to be teachers of children with SEN and for training to be provided for all practitioners. The Government's assurances of support and resources for staff training, given in the Strategy for SEN (DfES, 2004), were noted. Services were developed for schools to provide training, support, and advice, thus equipping them to meet a wider range of SEN. In addition a CPD programme was developed for TAs. Future actions included

embedding inclusion into the CPD programme, and ensuring it featured in all school development plans (LA[a], 2007).

Training courses were reported to have been positively evaluated and schools were encouraged to evaluate their own SEN practice and identify aspects for development (LA[a], 2007).

5.3.7 Context of policy text production

The LA wanted to develop a clearly written policy that set boundaries and ownership and encouraged support for developing inclusive practice. To that end, the LA worked with a university to produce a policy that was brief, clear, value based, and developed through a process of consultation with stakeholders. Its implementation was required to be systematic and authority led (LA[a], 2007). They then provided direction to enable schools to develop their own SEN policy, in accordance with Government requirements (LA[d], 2007).

The LA acknowledged that school surveys showed a reducing level of satisfaction in relation to the clarity of the rationale for SEN funding allocation. It was suggested that the review of the Framework was therefore timely (LA[c], 2007).

5.4 Discussion

LA policy reflected the tensions and dilemmas evident in national policy; trying to balance the ideology of inclusion with the reality of current practice. The policies articulated the goal of full inclusion and referred to the benefits of this for society. However the texts examined covered both policy and practice and the practical restrictions of full inclusion were evident.

The LA was mindful of the Government's requirement to increase inclusion and reduce reliance on statements. The majority of children with lesser needs had already moved to mainstream provision, therefore, to increase inclusion further, mainstream provision needs to accommodate children with more complex needs. The LA addressed this by identifying designated schools prepared to accommodate low incidence needs. Texts did not indicate whether support in designated schools would be in an inclusive environment or a unit. In the case of the latter, it could be argued that this is simply a matter of moving segregated education to a different location. In the case of the former, whilst it may provide an inclusive setting it is still likely to fall short of the ideal of children being educated at their local school. It provides a practical compromise, although one would have to question the difference in effectiveness and cost-effectiveness between this initiative and provision in co-located settings which the LA supported.

It also brings into question the role of special schools. The LA supports special schools and identified their role as that of providing for children with complex

needs and delivering outreach services. If inclusion continues to increase, the LA will be faced with the dilemma of having children with complex needs for whom mainstream education is inappropriate, but falling special school rolls that threaten the viability of special provision.

The LA addressed the Government's requirement to reduce reliance on statements, by providing them in only the most complex cases and by not making them a focus of funding allocation. However, this requires schools to use the resources provided, to meet the needs of children with SEN and without statements. The LA does not direct schools with regard to the allocation of resources; LA strategies referred to using their best endeavours to meet the needs of children with SEN.

Reference was made to the need for accountability on the part of schools for their SEN spending. However, the measures referred to were too general, and specific targets undefined, to be useful in identifying value for money received from SEN provision. The LA supported the idea of spending decisions being made at the point of provision, however, to uphold the principle of safeguarding rights and entitlements, and to ensure cost-effective, equitable, and effective provision, tighter monitoring was necessary.

The LA articulated the importance of training in relation to improving provision. References were made to the identification of training needs, however, apart from a reference to courses receiving favourable feedback, there was no mention of the evaluation of training. The required outcomes associated with

training were insufficient to, for example, indicate the effectiveness or cost-effectiveness of training. To establish the latter, the LA needed to introduce more specific evaluation than indicated in the documents.

The LA wanted to increase parental confidence in mainstream SEN provision thus reducing reliance on special provision. To that end it developed a method of funding which it believed supported inclusive thinking and would ensure that children with similar difficulties would be funded equally whether they attended mainstream or special provision. The approach taken reflected Crowther *et al's* (1998) structural model of funding (section 2.3.2). This was unlikely to be achieved as the costs of special school provision have been shown to be higher per pupil than costs of mainstream provision (Crowther *et al*, 1998), meaning that children in special schools were likely to benefit from a larger slice of the resources than children in mainstream. However, it is necessary to consider whether children with MLD would be treated equitably under the LAs funding formula.

Children with MLD in mainstream provision may or may not have a statement. Without a statement and in mainstream provision they would be funded from the high incidence needs allocation. With a statement they would be funded as a low incidence need through the BLD. If they are in receipt of a statement and are educated in special or designated provision, they too will be funded according to the appropriate BLD. However, MLD is referred to in three BLD as well as in the high incidence criteria. MLD as a group is not defined in the policy text. In the BLD, MLD is referred to individually at the lowest level of

BLD and in association with other difficulties as the level of SEN becomes more severe. As the children impacted by this policy are in one LA, it would be anticipated that children with similar difficulties would have been treated similarly in terms of statement issue. However, it has been acknowledged that some parents will apply for statements where others may not. It is therefore possible that MLD children with similar difficulties could be funded differently in this system, not because of a fault in the funding formula, but because of the lack of specific definition of MLD, and of trigger points that would warrant the issue of a statement.

Despite the possibility of inequity from the perspective of children with MLD, it was noted that the LA included in each BLD the associated provision that may be anticipated for needs at that level. This provision accounted for academic, social and environmental needs; an example of an interactive model of disability. The interactive model has been associated with inclusive provision as discussed in Chapter 2.

LA policy also reflected aspects of the human rights approach to inclusion. It stated that children without SEN had a right: "…to learn that people are not all the same, and that those with special educational needs or disabilities should not be treated differently." (LA[b], 2007:1) and that children with SEN had a right to: "…membership of the same group as every one else." (LA[b], 2007:1).

These rights require children with SEN to be included in the mainstream group, and treated in the same way as everyone else. This creates a dilemma.

Children with SEN are treated differently in order to support their learning and meet their needs. They are taught in different ways, by different teaching staff, in different locations, and with different funding. The education system is geared up to provide differently for children with SEN, and does not, therefore, provide a model for children without SEN to follow, in order to learn not to treat children with SEN differently. The dilemma, a pedagogical one as well as a social dilemma, is therefore whether children with SEN should be treated as the majority, in which case all of their needs may not be met, or differently from the majority in which case their needs will be met, but possibly to the detriment of the majority. It is difficult to support the right that children without SEN should be able to learn that children with SEN should not be treated differently, when current provision may actively support the notion that they should be treated differently.

With regards to the right of membership to the same group as their peers, inviting children with SEN into the same group as everyone else implies that they were not part of that group previously. This right could be construed as exclusive rather than inclusive. To suggest that being different from the norm is unacceptable, would not demonstrate acceptance of diversity which, it is claimed, is valued in the LA.

The LA made clear its requirement to monitor and evaluate activity in order to ensure cost-effective and effective provision. As Lindsay (2003) suggested particular aspects of inclusion were evaluated rather than the effectiveness of inclusion itself (section 2.2.6). It identified the outcome measures to be used,

but not targets. It was feasible that activity in the areas being measured would not have had a direct impact on the quality of provision for children. For example: a reduction in statements may have been seen, however, the reason behind the reduction would have been important in deciding whether provision was effective. The Audit Commission raised with the LA the need to incorporate some measures focused on individual pupil programmes. Such measures would build links between specific provision, costs and change in performance. Data such as this would facilitate improved performance, enable comparisons to be made, and build knowledge regarding effective provision for different types of SEN.

5.5 Conclusion

LA policy accurately reflected and supported Government policy and demonstrated that the LA was facing the same dilemmas at a local level as the Government: the balancing of mainstream and special provision; the need to provide equitably for all children with finite resources; the challenge of the statement system that takes funds for SEN, thus reducing the amount available for the development of mainstream practice, even though the latter would reduce the need for statements.

The LA's aim was to produce policy text that was articulate, set boundaries and encouraged practitioner support for inclusion. Terminology such as 'best endeavours' and conflicting statements such as, stating that the LA must work towards full inclusion, whilst at the same time indicating that it is unachievable

may impact its interpretation and enactment at school level. From a funding perspective, it is possible that the lack of definition of MLD may impact provision at school level.

With regard to the Bowe *et al* (1992) model, this examination of LA policy provides evidence of a cycle of policy within the SEN context. Within the context of policy text production, national policy is interpreted and new policy text created to meet local needs, as perceived by LA decision-makers. However, LA policy sets out a framework for local activity, it does not specify practice, thus it is open to interpretation in the same way as national policy. The next chapter looks at LA interview evidence, providing an opportunity to identify whether policy, as described here is reflected in LA practice.

CHAPTER 6

LOCAL AUTHORITY INTERVIEWS

6.0 Introduction

This chapter analyses evidence from LA participants, whose role was to oversee the implementation of LA policy at school level. Participants were directly involved in developing policy and/or in ensuring its implementation in schools, providing evidence in relation to the research questions and also adding to the evidence for the continuous policy cycle (Bowe *et al*, 1992).

6.1 Aims

The LA policy analysed in the previous chapter, provided an understanding of the LA's ethos in relation to inclusion and the framework within which LA activity occurred. Evidence from LA participants firstly indicated whether practice supported policy and secondly, provided practical examples of the enactment of policy at LA level. The analysis of this data therefore informs the following research questions:

1. What is the policy to practice context for inclusion of pupils with MLD?
2. How do schools (head teachers and teachers) implement the policy regarding the inclusion of pupils with MLD?
4. What are the views of the variety of stakeholders tasked with implementation of inclusion policy as practised at the school level?

In the previous chapter, evidence supported the idea of a continuous policy cycle, in relation to the transfer of national policy to LA level, its subsequent interpretation and re-drafting for the local context and its enactment at the LA level (Bowe *et al*, 1992). This chapter will provide an opportunity to further examine the relationship between policy and practice at the LA level.

6.2 Methods

6.2.1 Participants

Seven participants were involved in this stage of the data collection: Principal Educational Psychologist (PEP); Head of the Inclusion Advisory Service (HIAS); Principal Special Education Officer (PSEO); two advisory officers (AO), and two educational psychologists (EP). The senior participants had responsibilities in relation to the development of policy and ensuring its correct implementation. The remaining participants held advisory positions, supporting the implementation of policy in schools.

6.2.2 Material

The schedules used for these interviews varied according to job role. The questions asked and roles to which they were addressed are shown as Appendix B. They incorporated aspects of inclusion, such as what an inclusive classroom might look like, and whether anyone benefitted or suffered from IE; parental involvement in their child's education; multi-agency working and co-

operation; LA services and support for schools; aspects of pedagogy, such as differentiation of the curriculum, and ideal learning environments, and elements of teacher training, for example, the identification of training needs and subsequent evaluation, and support for SENCOs.

The interview schedules were a guide for the interviewer during semi-structured interviews as described in Chapter 3.

6.2.3 Procedure

The LA Lead provided guidance in relation to the appropriate LA departments to include in the research. Within these areas, key figures were identified and approached for an interview. Those selected were three heads of department, two EPs and two AOs, who were interviewed jointly. Issues of consent, anonymity and confidentiality were addressed, as described in Chapter 3 and interviews conducted using a voice recorder. Complete transcripts were returned to participants for checking.

6.2.4 Analysis

Interview transcripts were analysed with the research questions in mind: an a priori approach. Data was extracted from each transcript and recorded under appropriate question headings (Appendix O). The data within each heading was further divided into relevant sub-groups. The refined data were then

tabulated, cross-referencing it against job roles. That is, each individual piece of information was recorded against the job role that provided it.

The resulting tabulated data provided a means to identify the opinions of participants about aspects of the research questions, by: whole group; job role; individual, school and LA.

6.3 Results

6.3.1 Inclusion

There was a general view in favour of IE, qualified by the PEP with the proviso that children needed individualised support in a personalised way. The PSEO and EPs referred to inclusion benefitting the whole school community and changing attitudes in society, through children learning from each other. The PSEO acknowledged that there were two schools of thought: those who felt that mainstreaming had gone too far and that too many special schools had closed, and those who would have liked all special schools closed. It was suggested that there could be different models of education that combined arrangements, thus providing greater inclusion than the former segregationist model.

AOs spoke of inclusion in terms of taking an holistic approach to a child, rather than focusing on their difficulties. The PEP described inclusive practice in terms of: assessment, planning, evaluating, making appropriate adjustments,

involving pupils and parents, and having a personalised learning programme. The HIAS suggested that an inclusive classroom would have a range of staff, to provide greater access to individual and group help.

The PEP expressed the view that moving children from mainstream to special education should be a last resort. The PEP and PSEO highlighted issues in relation to children who were educated in special settings, having difficulty accessing mainstream opportunities when they left school, and leaving aware that they had not managed successfully within their peer group. The PEP expressed concern that some children left mainstream for special education too soon, and were disadvantaged because transferring back could be problematic. EPs felt that children with MLD should be included in mainstream settings, where they believed they could do well.

The PEP expressed concern that a focus on examination results, could mean that attention was directed at pupils who could improve results, and hence school points scores. Where management structures were under stress and teacher mobility was high, it was difficult to ensure that staff felt confident addressing the range of SEN, and that support packages were implemented in a coherent and consistent way. It was also recognised that in some instances children's needs were not identified early and support provided, hence their education was effected.

6.3.2 Defining MLD

The complexity of defining MLD was demonstrated by the range of difficulties it was considered to include, some of which fell within the ECM agenda. Features were described as global issues; functioning at the very low percentiles; speech and language difficulties; lack of progress despite interventions, becoming more noticeable as peers progressed; poor concentration and attention; lacking fine motor skills; poor social abilities, and characteristics such as, lacking independence, passivity and low self-esteem. EPs suggested that these children could lie on the boundary between special and mainstream education and sometimes, but not always, were in receipt of a statement.

The PEP described the group as a “catch all” for children who were failing, but whose difficulty was undefined, and it was suggested that providing a group label would do nothing in terms of moving forward the debate surrounding them. It was noted that the group lacked any kind of pressure group support, meaning that there was little compulsion within the system to provide for children with MLD.

Psychology participants referred to them as the children it was easiest to forget, those who got lost in secondary school, and those whom they had to ensure did not slip through the net. It was suggested that as behaviour was not usually an issue with children with MLD, whilst they could be found in every class, they did not draw attention.

The PEP had concerns that children with learning and cognition difficulties were not identified and therefore not tracked, hence there was a lack of knowledge with regards to progress and effective interventions. In terms of the continuum of needs, children with MLD were said to fall in the middle, between those supported by the CAF and those supported by National Strategy programmes. They were considered to provide the greatest challenge for teachers, as no one strategy addressed all issues, and interventions did not necessarily lead to improvement. This middle ground was considered to be the area where teachers lacked confidence. There was a view that in a well functioning system children with MLD would make the best progress.

6.3.3 Statements

The statement process was described as a rule-bound process requiring input from different services. The PSEO reported that there was a need to ensure that provision articulated on statements was adequate, detailing the strategies and approaches that schools were expected to deploy. In special settings the package of provision was almost pre-determined, whilst in mainstream, Outreach support may be recommended. Parents were fully involved in the process. It was suggested that a good school would not need a statement to provide for a child; it would already be doing those things that were needed.

6.3.4 Parental rights

Two senior participants indicated that it was the parents' choice whether a child attended mainstream or special education, although the default position was to support parents into mainstream. It was considered a difficult choice for parents; some, it was suggested by the PEP, may have thought that they needed special education for their child, but after visiting special and mainstream settings decided that either, their child's difficulties were not severe enough to warrant special education, or that they preferred mainstream. The PSEO suggested that parents might see special provision in terms of providing a separate learning community, rather than considering the curriculum available, believing their children to be vulnerable in mainstream settings. It was reported that interest in special provision developed as children moved from primary towards secondary education.

The parent partnership was considered important between LA and parents, as well as between schools and parents. It was suggested by the PSEO, that without a good relationship, schools would fail to make progress with a child. The PEP reported that where parents lost confidence in schools, or gave children mixed messages out of step with their school, children failed to get the best learning environment.

EPs felt that practitioners in schools and the LA listened to, and took account of parents' views, adapting methods to suit what was working at home. The family was considered to form part of the multi-agency team, rather than being

isolated from professionals. AOs and EPs provided a range of training and information for parents to support them.

6.3.5 LA services and multi-agency working

Policy demonstrated an early intervention approach to provision. AOs reported that 'Reading Recovery' interventions were directed towards the lowest scoring children in Year 1, whilst the HIAS reported that speech and language therapists provided direct intervention in primary schools, whilst offering training and advice to teachers in secondary. The LA language and communication team, working in conjunction with the speech and language therapy team were able to focus on training and advisory work in addition to individual referrals.

The HIAS indicated that schools were required to act upon advice provided by specialist teachers in relation to specific interventions. Some children in mainstream provision had similar needs to children in special school, so where specific interventions did not result in improvement, the Outreach service provided support. Time was allocated to schools by speech and language therapists and EPs. Schools needed to decide how best to use that time and to identify where they needed the support of particular expertise. Most of the EPs' work was reported to be through adults rather than directly with the children; helping schools to help themselves. EPs suggested that schools may be fighting for more time from agencies when that may not be the solution to their issue.

The HIAS reported that agencies were working more collaboratively. EPs reported that this integrated approach would facilitate the earlier identification of needs and intervention, more efficient working and prevent children from falling through gaps. Further benefits reported by the PEP, were that the CAF enabled information to be gathered once, negating the need for parents to be involved with a range of professionals and where the inclusive approach to education did not work, processes would be in place to enable other professionals to provide support.

A barrier to multi-agency working was that different services had different entry criteria for admitting children to their service, hence a difficulty that would warrant intervention by one agency, may not by another. It was considered that with goodwill and sufficient resources, training and the development of practice would result in an effective system. An additional issue identified by the HIAS, was that LA central services did not manage staff in schools, and therefore relied on goodwill for interventions to be implemented. Other services managed their teams working in schools directly.

6.3.6 SEN resources

Senior participants indicated that funding for children with learning and cognition difficulties, was included in schools' budgets; five per cent of the AWPU was allocated for SEN. There was a high level of delegation of funding to schools to empower and resource them to make decisions. It was noted that where a child entered a school during an academic year, they had to be

supported from existing funds. It was suggested that if children with SEN were funded independently, they could be seen as being outside the school community, whereas funding children from schools' budgets, supported them being viewed as part of the school community.

6.3.7 School management

The PEP suggested that a good senior management structure in schools would: enable teachers to obtain the support they need in a timely manner; ensure the effective implementation of National Strategies; address short term issues, and focus on long term needs and planning. EPs reported that schools needed to be adaptable and flexible to meet children's needs.

In secondary education, an effective management structure was described by the PEP as, identifying issues and addressing them "with gusto", drawing in extra resource time, and being pro-active in identifying issues to avoid the need for additional resource. A successful school was considered to: demonstrate pupils "making good progress", have "strong self-evaluation documentation", and successful Ofsted reports; problem-solve; make good use of support, and be precise in documenting and evaluating programmes of support. In addition, the PEP considered that effective schools would be able to address pupil needs within allocated resources, not therefore requiring additional funds.

6.3.8 Training and support

6.3.8.1 SENCOs

EPs recognised that SENCOs could feel isolated. They were often appointed from within the school and since courses relating to the function of the role were unavailable, they learned by doing, with support from EPs and the PSEO. The HIAS reported that SENCOs were encouraged and supported to work towards a Diploma in SEN, which counted towards a Masters qualification.

The HIAS indicated that regular LA panels that were organised to discuss, inform, support and train SENCOs. School improvement officers also held SENCO meetings. The PEP pointed out that providing support in this form, relied on SENCOs attending.

The PEP expressed concern about the amount of change taking place, being able to identify those who would be affected, and ensuring that accurate and timely information reached them. It was anticipated that the introduction of CAF co-ordinators responsible for developing co-ordinated working across geographic areas, would ensure that schools were informed of processes for accessing support systems. The PEP suggested that responsibility for SENCO support had become fragmented through the change process and that CAF activity, rather than SENCO forums, would bring a cohesive approach to SEN.

6.3.8.2 Teachers

The HIAS and the PEP highlighted the need for schools to be pro-active in improving expertise. The PEP considered that teaching and learning needed to improve and be consistently high. It was suggested by EPs and the PSEO that teachers may not have the knowledge necessary to support children with SEN. All participants reported the need for training in the effective use of resources, assessment and intervention strategies.

Teachers were offered a one year double module in specific learning difficulties to enable them to teach children with literacy difficulties. However, it was noted by the HIAS, that the take-up of training by schools, had tended to be driven by National Strategies. AOs reported that teachers trained for 'Reading Recovery', for which funding was available, provided literacy expertise, managing other interventions, completing assessments, and influencing practice. Elements covered in this training were felt to be lacking in initial teacher training. It was considered that teachers had insufficient time in initial training to cover what was needed for SEN.

Some teachers were considered to be unaware of the LA services available to them, which the PSEO suggested was an issue of training and communication, although the HIAS felt that schools knew what was available.

With regards to classroom support, EPs indicated that primary teachers were good at asking TAs for support, whilst it was considered harder for secondary

teachers, where TAs either moved around with a group of pupils, or worked in particular subject areas. The PEP suggested that behaviour issues could sap a teacher's energy, and take their attention, confidence and enthusiasm.

6.3.8.3 TAs

The HIAS reported that children were taught, in the broadest sense, by support staff as well as teachers. However, the PEP and AOs indicated that often the least qualified and supported staff worked with the most needy children when in fact, the latter needed support from the most skilled teachers. The PEP and EPs reported that in some instances TAs did the work for children, rather than supporting them to do it. AOs and EPs referred to the balance to be found between dependence on TAs and peers, and independence.

There was concern that pressure on teachers to get children through the curriculum requirements, meant almost handing over responsibility for children with SEN to TAs. The PEP referred to a "fatal flaw", if teachers felt justified in not giving time to children with SEN because somebody else was supporting them.

TAs were considered by AOs to be becoming more skilled; they needed good literacy and numeracy skills and good spoken English. The HIAS indicated that TAs were not recruited without qualifications; in some instances they were highly educated. Parents were sometimes recruited to the role.

Induction training for TAs had laid the foundations for a career structure; they could achieve Higher Level TA status and train as teachers. In addition, a National Qualifications Framework Level 2 qualification was offered with further education colleges. Much time had been spent training support staff, who were reported by the HIAS to be a less mobile workforce than teachers, in relation to the NC, literacy difficulties, and to run language groups.

An issue was to ensure that TAs were appropriately deployed once trained; schools were reportedly using TAs effectively and engaging them in Wave 3 interventions, for example, 'Catch Up' delivery. The latter was designed for delivery by TAs, who reportedly enjoyed this role and often had an in-depth understanding of children's knowledge, and their preferred learning styles.

6.3.9 Pedagogy

The HIAS referred to the need for a productive learning environment that catered for different learning styles, and whole class, group and individual work. AOs and EPs spoke of the knowledge needed by teachers and different techniques important in teaching children with MLD: knowing each child's needs well, avoiding making assumptions about what they knew; using questioning to support a child's learning as opposed to providing them with answers; talking less and giving crisp, clear instructions; carrying learning points over from one day to the next; providing demonstrations, rather than long explanations for activities and point out learning as children progressed.

Where progress was not made using specific interventions, AOs suggested that the first consideration was the teaching approach used. The HIAS spoke of the need for small steps in teaching children with SEN. EPs appreciated that teachers may want to work more slowly to support children with SEN, but were under time pressures to cover the curriculum.

The PSEO suggested that whilst one-to-one interventions were a simple approach to supporting children, it was not necessarily a creative method. It was necessary to identify situations in which children with MLD demonstrated independent action and why, and then to build on that. They were said to need more of the same teaching, rather than something completely different to other children. Where provision was well mapped, a child's needs should be considered and any shortfalls identified and provided for, within existing budgets. The PSEO and EPs spoke of the need to be creative, and consider different models, and ways of utilising resources and programmes in meeting needs.

6.3.9.1 Differentiation

EPs highlighted the importance of having differentiated materials available for staff to use, and commented on the ways in which the curriculum could be differentiated to facilitate access for children with MLD, for example, holding up green or red cards to indicate understanding, or performing detailed self-assessments, which were acknowledged to be time-consuming. EPs were

concerned that differentiation was sometimes seen as a luxury, for which there was not always time.

A further concern of the HIAS was that primary teachers sometimes relied on TAs to differentiate material in the classroom. The differentiation and personalisation of learning, and making it manageable, was considered to be tied in with the effective use of support staff and planning; there was a need for collaborative working within the team and with other agencies.

A difficulty with TAs was reported to be their limited availability for planning outside school hours, which was regarded as a leadership issue. Programmes such as 'Catch Up' were felt to benefit everyone, provided teachers and TAs communicated well. However, AOs believed that some TAs worked very hard for very little, and that there was a lot of goodwill involved.

6.3.9.2 Interventions

AOs explained that there was a need to demonstrate cost-effectiveness with programmes such as 'Reading Recovery', and hence it was important to support children to perform at the national average as quickly as possible. Such interventions were reported to aid children's problem-solving abilities, encourage independence and create active learners. AOs considered that interventions such as 'Reading Recovery' facilitated the identification of children with true special needs. It was suggested that without the support of the programme, some children could have been labelled as having MLD.

EPs noted the importance of providing a range of interesting activities that were related to the curriculum and reflected real life; such activities needed to be organised and structured. Interactive whiteboards were highlighted as an engaging tool. EPs reported that some children found it hard to cope in a large class all day, and needed some small group work to provide respite.

Programmes such as 'Catch Up' had sufficient flexibility within them to enable TAs to make it interesting for children. A key feature of the intervention programmes was the frequency with which they were conducted, for example, daily or twice weekly.

The PSEO indicated that children with MLD would be expected to receive support with literacy and language, and with fine motor skills. It was suggested that mainstream and special settings could offer the same interventions, although delivered in different ways. In the latter, specific support was embedded within the daily curriculum.

6.3.9.3 Behaviour

Behavioural issues were recognised by all participants as a difficulty. EPs reported that primary schools, with fewer staff, better communication and hence a consistent approach, could contain behaviour. There was recognition that behaviour could be difficult to manage where too many children in a class had SEN, although the definition of 'too many' was questioned by EPs. Where work was well planned and targeted and where flexibility in the curriculum

facilitated creativity, behaviour was considered to be less of an issue by the HIAS.

AOs were keen to see more guided reading in classrooms, but were aware that teachers were reluctant to work with small groups, because they were simultaneously required to manage the behaviour of the remainder of the class. The PEP reported that in situations where classes were streamed, there was the possibility of pupils recognising their position in a group with difficulties, and succumbing to peer pressure to be cool and not to work.

6.3.9.4 Transition

The use of special schools was said by the PEP to indicate areas of concern with regard to children with learning and cognition difficulties. These being: children at the point of transfer to primary and to secondary schools, and children at KS4 failing to cope in secondary and losing confidence. At these points in their education, it was considered that energy was focused on obtaining statements for children, as opposed to making links between schools, transferring information and ensuring support followed the child.

Changes were in progress to support new Year 7 pupils by: adapting the Year 7 curriculum to reflect that in primary; introducing learning bases; having fewer teacher changes.

At the point of transfer to secondary education, EPs reported that primary staff arranged transition meetings, EPs met with learning mentors, SENCOs, and EPs for the new school, to ensure children would not become lost in the system. It was a concern of the PEP that:

> …no matter how good the primary school might have been…, a lot of damage can be done within a few years to move a child who *was* engaged, but having difficulty, to a child who's having extreme difficulty and is not engaged.

Efforts were therefore made to support children through transition periods in their education. In relation to transfer to KS1, the HIAS spoke of: multi-agency meetings to identify children; school visits during the first term to advise about identifying and supporting needs. For children moving into secondary education, an annual schools' conference provided opportunities to share information. The HIAS spoke of the LA's reliance on schools to conduct IEP reviews in Year 6, thereby identifying children needing on-going support, monitoring progress and providing a transition plan.

EPs reported that parents concerned that their child would not cope in mainstream secondary education considered special provision. They believed that a lot of children with MLD moved to special provision at the point of secondary transfer.

The PEP considered that in some instances, primary schools applied for statements for a children in Year 6 to ensure that their needs were identified and supported at secondary school, or to give them the choice of special provision. This was thought to be linked to a lack of understanding about secondary SEN provision and wanting to do their best for a child.

6.3.9.5 Social development

Low self-esteem was seen as a barrier in education for children with SEN. The PEP reported that schools needed to boost the self-esteem of all children or, for children with learning and cognition difficulties, feelings of low self-esteem would be compounded by a lack of motivation and confidence, and in extreme cases, children may feel isolated, vulnerable and be picked on or bullied.

Children were said to need positive social situations to aid their learning, and improve their self esteem and confidence. EPs said: "…it's the social aspect that impacts on a child's confidence and self-esteem and happiness more than the nitty gritty learning details.".

EPs recognised the possibility that, whilst additional support may help children to develop cognitive abilities, there was the risk that this could highlight their needs in front of other children and therefore have a negative impact.

Similarly, EPs recognised difficulties for children with SEN in joining support groups, where the children were aware that in so doing, they would be labelled and perhaps bullied. EPs reported that children treated each other as equals in KS1, however, at secondary age, SEN could become an issue socially.

It had been noted by EPs that friendships rarely crossed ability groups, and that children with similar levels of SEN tended to stay together, having had similar experiences. Success had been seen in primary schools with buddy

groups, where several children had responsibility for supporting one child. Primary settings also provided social skills training and positive role models to support less able children.

6.4 Discussion

The LA's policy of inclusion was supported by participants. However, their responses demonstrated the many tensions that existed in trying to provide an IE environment, such as: the requirement for schools to meet the needs of children with SEN, whilst achieving government targets; the need to increase inclusion, whilst maintaining special provision for some children.

Participants adopted an interactive approach in relation to models of disability, referring to an holistic view of needs, rather than a medical model view of children's difficulties. Inclusive practice was considered in terms of academic access, environmental adjustment and social participation.

The lack of definition of MLD was considered to inhibit the identification of appropriate interventions. It was reported that there was little impetus in the system to address the needs of pupils with MLD, however, it was also acknowledged that pupils with MLD were in classrooms every day, providing the greatest challenge for teachers.

Whilst striving towards increased inclusion, the LA maintained special provision to provide choice for parents. This moderate approach to inclusion in practice

was reportedly reflected by schools, particularly primaries, where statements were said to be applied for in Years 5 and 6, for children whom practitioners felt would struggle in mainstream secondary. This reflects a possible lack of faith in secondary SEN provision. The choice of mainstream or special provision was recognised to be a challenge for parents who had to balance their child's needs and character in relation to the academic, environmental and social provision available from the different settings. The intervention of their child's school in applying for statements, could be considered to facilitate or hinder their decision-making process.

Participants were concerned to raise standards of teaching and learning in mainstream provision, in order for children with MLD to achieve to their full potential. This required sound school management structures that enabled both children and staff to be supported. Tensions were evident in this respect, as high teacher mobility placed structures under stress and training in relation to National Strategies appeared to be prioritised above training for SEN, possibly as a response to the need to achieve targets.

Multi-agency working was viewed positively by participants for its support of inclusive practice. However, it was reported that different entry criteria for access to services could be problematic. It was also acknowledged that the success of multi-agency working in particular, relied upon the goodwill of schools to carry forward inclusive practice. It was anticipated that CAF activity would improve lines of communication and support the provision of information to SENCOs amongst others. However, although the CAF would improve

communication relating to specific SEN related matters, it would be unlikely to provide the breadth of support offered by SENCO forums. It was possible that SENCOs needed to be encouraged to attend networking events, although SENCOs were said to have some responsibility in terms of attending when support was offered.

The deployment of TAs in supporting children with SEN was a source of concern. It was suggested that in some situations, the most needy children were supported by the least qualified staff, and that issues of class management prevented teachers from working with these children themselves. Teachers faced a dilemma; work with the children with SEN themselves, possibly to the detriment of the rest of the class, or place the TA with the children with SEN, possibly to the detriment of the latter. On the one hand teachers were being told to work with the most needy children, and on the other they were being supported by trained TAs, and directed to use them effectively.

6.5 Conclusion

LA policy required a focus on increasing inclusion and reducing reliance on statements. The evidence demonstrated the practical action being taken at the LA level in support of that policy: a focus on support services, early intervention programmes, training and development opportunities and the allocation of funds to schools. However, whilst focusing on increasing inclusion, evidence demonstrated the dilemmas and tensions that existed

between moving practice forward in one direction whilst maintaining existing special provision and in attempting to address the needs of a large group of pupils whose difficulties defy specific definition. This research was evidence of their concern with regard to the latter.

These findings demonstrated the complexity of the policy cycle (Bowe *et al*, 1992) and of taking written text and applying it in practical situations; over-laying inclusive policy on a segregated background and trying to make them fit together. The action of creating the policy within which LA and school level practice was to occur, took place within the context of policy text production. The evidence in this chapter moves from the creation of the policy and setting of aims, to the practice; making it happen within that policy framework. At this point LA and school practice become linked whilst remaining separate entities, hence within the context of practice there are subunits of practice: one for schools and one for the LA.

The next chapter moves into the context of practice of schools, discussing data collected from primary schools by survey.

CHAPTER 7

SURVEY EVIDENCE

7.0 Introduction

Previous chapters have critically appraised policy from national and local perspectives. Consequent to that, is the need to consider the relationship between the contexts of influence, policy text production examined previously, and the interpretation and implementation of policy in the context of practice, as per the *Bowe et al* (1992) cycle.

This chapter focuses on the primary school survey data that formed the first stage of data collection in the context of practice. It provides insights into classroom practice, to the tensions and dilemmas faced by teachers in providing an inclusive environment, and by school leaders in balancing the different aspects of mainstream education, whilst treating pupils equally.

7.1 Aims

The aim of the survey was to obtain an overview of MLD provision in practice. The data collected, informed the research questions and enhanced the interview and observation stages, by identifying areas for more detailed investigation.

The survey data addressed the following questions:

2. How do schools (head teachers and teachers) implement the policy regarding the inclusion of pupils with MLD?
3. What are the experiences of teachers and pupils with MLD in special and inclusive settings?

Using the policy cycle model (Bowe *et al*, 1992), attention was drawn to the context of practice. However, it has been demonstrated that when examining data at the national and LA levels, there has been some overlap between the different contexts. The survey data provides an opportunity to examine this from the perspective of schools.

7.2 Methods

7.2.1 Participants

Six primary schools participated in the survey. Each received questionnaires for completion by the following: head teacher, SENCO/inclusion manager, teacher, TA, governor with SEN responsibility, a parent. Head teachers or SENCOs/inclusion managers, selected participants where there was more than one jobholder. Parents were selected who had children with MLD.

7.2.2 Material

Schools were provided with separate questionnaires per job role (Appendix A gives an example). Core questions in each remained the same, for example: experience; characteristics that constitute MLD; key features of an inclusive education, issues around parental involvement. Some questions reflected different perspectives on the same topic: teachers were asked how their training needs were identified and met; head teachers were asked how they identified and met training needs amongst staff. In other cases, questions were directed solely to one role, for example, head teachers were asked about the allocation of resources across the school.

Open and closed questions were asked, eliciting both qualitative and quantitative data. The questionnaire design is detailed in Chapter 3: 3.3.2.

7.2.3 Procedure

Having obtained the consent of head teachers for schools to participate, sets of questionnaires, information sheets and consent forms were hand delivered to schools. Participants were offered the choice of self-completion, or to complete the questionnaires in structured interviews; three schools selected interviews. These were conducted and responses were typed and returned to participants for checking. Appointments were made with the other three schools for the questionnaires to be collected. Whilst time and resource intensive, this process resulted in a high rate of return.

7.2.4 Analysis

Data were amalgamated by job role. Using an a priori approach, categories were selected with the research questions in mind, to provide a framework for the analysis (Appendix O). The raw data were interrogated and allocated to the appropriate category. Categories were further sub-divided by common themes that emerged. Where appropriate, frequencies were generated to indicate the strength of that theme within and/or across participant groups.

7.3 Results

For the purposes of reporting, the role of SENCO/inclusion manager will be referred to as SENCO. Roles are referenced in tables as follows: head teacher (H/T), SENCO/inclusion manager (S), teacher (T), TA, parent (P), governor (G).

7.3.1 Participants

Schools responded well and twenty-eight questionnaires were returned in total, correctly completed. All six head teachers' and parents' questionnaires were returned and five of each of the SENCO/inclusion manager, teacher and TA. The return of governor questionnaires was disappointing, with just one returned by a governor who was not responsible for SEN.

Four children for whom parent responses were received, were in KS2, with the remaining two in KS1. Boys and girls were equally represented.

7.3.2 Inclusion

Participants were asked for the key features of an inclusive education. Their responses are shown in table 7.1.

Parents' perspectives focused on inclusion as experienced by their children: being with their friends, not feeling different, being included in the life of the school. One parent said that school was her child's social life as well as his education. Practitioners' views were directed towards their provision of an inclusive education: meeting needs, removing barriers, providing an appropriate curriculum: an academic approach, viewing inclusion in terms of inputs.

Practitioners gave importance to relationships in terms of the community and parent partnership, but did not refer to the social implications for individual pupils.

Table 7.1: key features of an inclusive education.

	H/T	S	T	TA	G	P	Total
Including all children							
Meets the needs of all children in a diverse school/access for all; supports and encourages them to achieve their full potential.	1	2	2	2	2		9
Equal access and opportunity rather than being treated the same way.	1			1			2
All children treated the same; each has their own needs.			1	1			2
Peer learning: powerful, enabling, develops independent learners.	1						1
School works to remove barriers to learning, minimise their negative impact.	2						2
Support for SEN/MLD children.		1					1
Clear policies and means of referral.	1						1
Identification, support and intervention structures in place.	1						1
Inclusion is not making allowances because of difficulties, for example, for poor behaviour.	1						1
Pedagogy and staff training							
Competent staff with clear understanding of the meaning of inclusion.	1	1		1			3
Include all children through curriculum planning, and differentiation.	1	2	2	2			7
Good teaching and learning based on pupils' prior attainment; interactive teaching and learning.			2				2
Education appropriate for individual needs (in a collaborative context), using different teaching methods.	2	2	2			1	7
Enables children to take charge of their learning.					1		1
Active learning.	1						1
Relationships							
Involving all sectors of the community.	1	1					2
Good feedback to staff and parents.	1						1
Parent partnership/include parents		1	1			1	3
Resources							
Funding matched to needs of pupils.	1						1
Good resources/appropriate materials		1		2			3
Social implications							
It is important that they are included in the school.						2	2
It is important that she does not feel different.						1	1
Being with friends.						1	1
Children with disabilities are enabled to participate in mainstream education.						1	1

Two features of inclusion were common across roles: the inclusion of all children in mainstream education and the role of teachers in meeting individual needs, through curriculum planning and varied teaching strategies. The data suggested a dilemma in this regard: participants referred to: the requirement for all children to have equal access and opportunity, as opposed to being treated the same way (TA); children being treated in the same way, each having their own needs addressed (teacher and TA). This reflects the dilemma of difference: whether pupils are provided with equality of opportunity, in which case the resource to support each may be different, or whether they are provided with equal resource, that is treated the same, which may not provide equality of opportunity. One head teacher identified the tension in balancing support for pupils with MLD in schools, with the demands of the standards agenda.

In order to achieve IE, one head teacher referred to the need for clear policy direction, a framework for the identification of needs, referral and provision of support and funding matched to pupils' needs. Other responses indicated the need for: differentiation of the curriculum, learning based on prior attainment, different teaching methods and the development of independence. It was reported that to support this required well trained staff and resources. One parent and a teacher reflected the view that inclusion should not be a means of saving money.

In the context of a community with a range of socio-economic backgrounds, inclusion was considered vital by all, preventing children from being

disadvantaged by the systems in place and generating tolerance, support and respect. Responses referred to inclusion helping people to come to terms with their own prejudices and demonstrating team work.

Practitioners reported that inclusion allowed pupils to develop independence and feel equal. They cited benefits in: higher expectations; having a greater range of role models; being with friends and peers; learning from each other. Parents acknowledged that they benefitted from knowing that their children were happy, developing interpersonal skills and respect. One reported that her child's education helped her to deal with his difficulties and support him at home.

Head teachers and two parents raised the possibility of pupils without SEN being disadvantaged because of inclusion. Head teachers recognised that teachers have a wide range of needs to accommodate with little support; pupils could suffer because what support was available, was always directed towards the same group of pupils.

Doubts were expressed across classroom roles about the ability to cater for all pupils with SEN in mainstream settings. Issues related to, a lack of trained staff, the inability of some pupils to access the curriculum and insufficient resources. Pupils with SEN were considered to be a source of stress for teachers.

7.3.3 Statements

Three out of six parents' children had statements; a fourth parent was struggling to get an accurate diagnosis. Of those with statements, one parent reported that the process required stamina. Another said that support from two charitable organisations and an EP had eased the process. One applied for a statement after being advised to by "a lady in the park". Despite initial doubts on the part of the school, the process was straightforward.

7.3.4 Defining MLD

Participants were asked to describe the main features of MLD. Responses varied as demonstrated in table 7.2.

Data considered on the basis of individual participants, shows the features mentioned most frequently were: poor concentration, language and communication problems, low self-esteem, attainment well below average age. The list demonstrates the range of both type of difficulty and severity of need, incorporated in the MLD group. Three job roles (four participants) included features that reflected the ECM agenda as opposed to learning difficulties.

Table 7.2: features of MLD

	H/T	S	T	TA	Total
Identified issues with:					
Language and communication problems	3		2	2	7
Emotional/behavioural difficulties	2	1	1		4
Medical issues			1		1
Environmental factors					
Child protection issues/difficult home life	1		2	1	4
Global difficulties					
Limited access to NC without differentiation	1	2		1	4
Global rather than specific difficulties	1	1			2
Where there is global delay, difficulty identifying primary factor	1	1	1		3
Measures					
Attainment well below average for age	2	2	1		5
Slow progression	2				2
Look as if doing okay until assessed	1				1
Difficulties with subject knowledge and learning skills					
Difficulty generalising learning	1	1			2
Difficulty understanding key concepts	1				1
Poor literacy and numeracy skills	1	1	1	1	4
Poor short term memory	1		1		2
Poor retention of knowledge	1	1			2
Poor concentration	3		1	5	9
Poor comprehension	1		1	3	5
Characteristics					
Hard to socialise	1	1			2
Low self-esteem/confidence/quiet		3	3	1	7
Poor co-ordination skills/lack of fine and gross motor skills		2		1	3

Alternatively by analysing the data by job role, it appeared that the features described, reflected the job role in relation to pupils with MLD: the range described, reducing as the perspective of the role narrowed, hence head teachers provided the greatest number of features; TAs the least.

The broad view of the group of head teachers, incorporated global and individual learning difficulties. However, other than one reference to difficulties socialising, they did not include features that it could be said, described a pupil's personality, such as being quiet with low self-esteem.

SENCOs had a greater focus on global difficulties, attainment below average, and individual characteristics. From their perspective, SENCOs may have considered their response in relation to the salient features of a group of children with MLD. As a group, teachers referred to more specific features relating to subject knowledge, learning skills and low self-esteem, perhaps taking a more individual perspective. TAs particularly noted poor concentration and comprehension, which they may observe more from working closely with children for longer periods.

Head teachers and teachers referred to combinations of EBD, language and communication difficulties, medical issues and child protection factors in their description of MLD. SENCOs referred only to EBD and TAs to communication difficulties.

Participants described children for whom social behaviour may have been an issue, due to their inability to access the curriculum. However, in comparison with their peers, they were described as quiet, lacking in confidence, demonstrating low self-esteem, and sometimes having difficulty socialising. They needed adult reassurance that could develop into a learned helplessness, and may have lacked the confidence to ask for help.

Parents described the main features of their children's difficulties as: dyslexia; epilepsy; short term memory difficulties; global learning difficulties in literacy and maths; reading; writing; concentration; autism, and a lack of confidence. These features again reflected the wide range of type and severity of difficulties described above by practitioners.

Numbers of children with MLD in classes/schools was perceived differently by different roles; most teachers and SENCOs cited 'a few', head teachers' responses ranged from 'a few' to 'up to half'. Four head teachers reported a rise in numbers of children with MLD; two said there was no change. Four SENCOs and teachers registered an increase in numbers, six said there was no change. Lack of definition of MLD, or different interpretations of the measures may have been responsible for the variation. It was reported that assessment of needs was improving and could be the reason for any perceived rise.

7.3.5 Parental rights

Although the Government has focused on the provision of information to parents to facilitate their choice of school, just one of the six parents indicated that they chose their child's school having considered Ofsted reports. In general, reputation, location and the presence of siblings were of importance in the decision.

The school-parent partnership was considered by all parents to be very important and by all jobholders to be either, quite, or very important. Participants were asked how the relationship affected the education of children. Their responses are shown in table 7.3.

The evidence indicated that the school-parent partnership could be defined in terms of communication, the quality of the relationship, shared expectations and issues. Amongst practitioners, it was reported that a good relationship facilitated the support of the child's learning by parents at home. This, in conjunction with support at school, clarifying expectations, sharing targets and having the will to move forward, supported children's progress.

Table 7.3: The affect of the school-parent partnership on education provision.

	H/T	S	T	TA	G	P	Total
Quality of the relationship							
Good relationship means more coherent home/school working. Parents know how to support child's learning at home. (Conversely: If do not work together and help children in the same way, leads to more problems).	4	3	4	5	1	1	18
Co-operation ensures maximum progress. (Conversely: poor relationship makes it difficult to get consent for interventions.	3						3
I get on better now/well with the school.						2	2
I feel involved now.						1	1
Communication							
Good communication leads to issues resolved quickly and support provided.		1				1	2
Fully informed parents make it easier to maintain support.	1			1		2	4
Vital to communicate progress and learn from each other.	1		1				2
Shared expectations							
Home/school expectations are clarified and reinforced effectively.			1	1		2	4
Share the vision, targets, direction and will, everything works better.		1					1
Do parents realise the extent of the difficulty?		1					1
Children need to see parents are interested in their education.			1				1
Issues							
Sometimes have to champion children. Teachers can think parent demanding.						1	1
Stress in relationship can lead to battle in which needs of child are lost. Focus becomes winning with child in centre.	1	2					3
Parents do not always understand effective allocation of resources.	1						1

Issues between schools and parents centred on scarce resources; parents wanted support for their children, and were said not to understand the need to allocate resources in ways that made the most effective use of them. It was reported that they used the SEN Code of Practice(DfES, 2001) to manipulate practice, and to continually press schools for more support. One head teacher commented that there were occasions when too much resource was given to one child; “parents that shout loudest sometimes get more.” It was necessary sometimes, to be assertive and let parents know that the provision their child received was all there was. Parents who were less able communicators would get their share and no more, and there was a view that resources needed to be shared more fairly.

Participants were asked about barriers to communication. Their responses are shown in table 7.4.

Schools cited parents’ emotions as a barrier to communication, for example: sometimes struggling to accept a child’s difficulties; parents possibly feeling guilty and difficulty understanding expectations for their child. Language was a barrier referred to by practitioners, who reported the difficulties of not having interpreters to hand, and parents using friends or siblings to translate, creating issues relating to confidentiality. For their part, parents found the barriers to be staff attitudes and a lack of information regarding their child’s provision.

Table 7.4: barriers to communication

	H/T	S	T	TA	G	P	Total
Understanding							
Language barriers	3	3		1	1		8
Parents' may have learning difficulties.			3				3
Emotions							
Emotional issues: parents feel guilty about their child's difficulty, struggle to accept it, and understand expectations.	4	1	2				7
Parents' attitude to school: 'it's your job'.		1					1
Parents' feel negative towards school due to own experience.			2				2
Confrontational parents.		1					1
Parents' feel not being communicated with. (Parent unable to find out IEPs).			1			2	3
Staff attitudes							
Staff attitude; some can be rude. They can talk to children but not adults.						2	2
It is school's job to improve situation.			1				1
Processes							
Understanding the Code of Practice and process.	1	1					2
Misunderstanding of written information /misinterpretation		1	1				2
Lack of information transferred between teachers.						1	1
Other							
Time issues	1						1

Participants reported ways in which schools involved parents in their child's education. These are shown in table 7.5.

Table 7.5: ways in which schools include parents.

	H/T	S	T	TA	G	P	Total
Meetings							
Formal meetings: IEPs; annual reviews	4	4	3	1	1	1	14
Informal meetings		2	1		1	3	7
Parents evenings	3	1	1				5
Workshops, forums							
Parent workshops/out of school learning activities	3		1	2			6
Parent Teacher Association/parents forum	4		2				6
Consultation							
Consultation on specific issues	1						1
Surveys	1						1
Home/school agreements			1				1
Events							
Encouraged to come in as volunteers/ invited to school for events	4	1	3	1		1	10
Assemblies	3		1				4
Informing							
Parents copied into IEPs termly/target cards	2	1	2				5
Weekly newsletters/class leaflets	4		1				5
Reports/curriculum letters	2		2				4
Providing work, guidance, direction (feedback).		2	4	2		4	12
Reading journals/home, school diaries		1		1			2
Phone calls to provide information						1	1
Home school support worker, EMAS TA	1						1

Whilst parents cited lack of information as a barrier to communication, practitioners listed ways in which they suggested parents were informed and included in the life of the school, for example, meetings, homework guidance for parents and invitations to school events.

Parents' responses focused on the individual communication that they had with the school about their child and the ways in which they could support them at

home. They indicated a preference for face-to-face communication and found head teachers, SENCOs and teachers to be flexible around meeting times. Parents did not mention the variety of written reports and information that schools included. When asked about whole school issues, parents did refer to seeing posters and newsletters in this regard.

7.3.6 Data use to inform practice

Head teachers used Government statistics, Standard Assessment Tests and Qualification and Curriculum Authority papers to review and predict performance, and to identify areas for focus. Curriculum targets for maths and literacy were set, and pupils were tracked through the year. Half termly or termly discussions reviewed progress, and informed groups for intervention. Regular reviews of practice enabled head teachers to deploy resources effectively, identify different techniques and teaching methods to be employed, and identify training needs.

7.3.7 Services external to school

Participants were asked their views about the performance of external services supporting children in their schools. A range of services was cited. The majority focused on: educational psychology; speech and language therapy; behaviour support, and special school outreach service. Most head teachers reported positive views of the services as a whole citing, “very good”, “well managed” and “responsive”. However, they indicated that more time was

needed, and one identified long waiting lists, too little support and not being joined up enough. Teachers reported that overall services were of a high standard when delivered, but also referred to long waiting lists, high staff turnover, and issues regarding seeing people during class time.

One head teacher spoke positively about LA SENCO meetings, although a SENCO commented that it was not well attended and that there was nothing for inclusion managers. Another SENCO said that there was a need for a stronger support network for all those involved in SEN.

7.3.8 SEN resources

Resource allocation was decided by Head teachers and SENCOs. With more funding head teachers indicated that they would: improve classroom facilities, employ extra staff, buy more time from external services and provide training opportunities. Addressing funding issues involved: prioritising development; obtaining the support of PTAs; obtaining increased funding; early intervention programmes, and a clearer system of specialist support according to need, rather than the rotation system around schools.

When speaking of resource allocation, head teachers indicated that support had to be prioritised. In one school teachers were allocated equally, whilst TAs were allocated according to need, as identified by data. Three head teachers indicated that equipment was allocated according to need, and one that it was allocated equally between children, unless there was a specific need.

7.3.9 Pedagogy

7.3.9.1 Training and support

It was considered important that people at all levels should understand the implications of inclusion for the school, and should be trained. Head teachers indicated that training needs were identified through a variety of means focusing on specific individual needs or whole staff training related to, for example, national strategies.

Head teachers used of a variety of methods to disseminate training, for example, whole staff meetings, small team or section meetings, In-service training days and notes. Five out of six head teachers reported that training was evaluated by discussing course objectives prior to courses and subsequent outcomes, and reviewed children's progress to identify changes brought about by course attendance. Four indicated that they observed the attendee to see that the course outcomes were being practiced. One school stated that training evaluation was a focus for attention. Training opportunities offered by head teachers and training uptake are shown in table 7.6.

Table 7.6: training opportunities offered (H) and training undertaken (S, T, TA).

	H	S	T	TA		H	S	T	TA
Training of up to one day.	6		2	4	Shadowing an experienced colleague within the school.	5	1		1
Short course (more than one day).	6	1	1	3	Shadowing an experienced colleague at another school.	5			
Course leading to certificate.	5				Time spent with a professional from outside the school, e.g. specialist teacher, outreach support, therapist.	6	3	3	3
Diploma.	2								
Higher Degree.	2		1		Other opportunities.	3	1	1	1
Time given for examining current literature	1	3	1						

Head teachers indicated that training and development opportunities were widely available. Two offered support for diplomas and degrees, and one supported time for staff to examine literature. Teachers and TAs identified that training and development opportunities most often took the form of one day, or short courses, and time spent with professionals from outside the school, such as speech and language, occupational and physiotherapists, and LA advisors. Whilst head teachers supported opportunities to shadow experienced colleagues from other schools, no staff took this up, despite cross-school links and joint observations being noted by one head teacher.

SENCOs considered LA advisory teams to be their main source of support, although induction and networking opportunities were considered poor. SENCOs were also the most critical of the support received by teachers: three out of five considering it poor. TAs were the most positive about the support they received, three out of five rating it very good.

7.3.9.2 Preparation for teaching children with MLD

Most parents believed that their child's teacher understood their expectations of the school. Five out of six indicated that they believed teachers understood their child's needs and had realistic expectations for them.

SENCOs, teachers and TAs were questioned about tasks they undertook in preparation for a child with MLD joining their class. These are shown in table 7.7.

Table 7.7: preparation for a child with MLD joining a class.

	S	T	TA
Discussions with previous teachers.	5	5	3
Discussions with specialist teachers (e.g. SENCO, LEA services).	5	5	3
Discussions with previous or current TA.	5	3	5
Meeting(s) with parents.	5	4	2
Access to documents and/or records.	5	4	4
Relevant Inset or CPD opportunities.	2	3	2
Access to appropriate literature.	5	4	4
Planning and preparation of appropriate materials.	5	4	3

The same job roles were asked about activities undertaken during non-teaching time in relation to pupils with MLD. Their responses are shown in table 7.8.

Table 7.8: non-teaching activities to support children with MLD

	S	T	TA
Consultation with the SENCO	5	5	4
Consultation with Specialist teachers	5	2	0
Consultation with specialist teacher support	4	0	2
Consultation with TA support For TA: consultation with teacher	4	3	 5
Consultation with pupils' parents in addition to set parents' evenings.	5	4	2
Preparation of appropriate materials for the pupil.	5	5	4
Consultation with professionals from outside school.	4	2	2
Other activities (please specify).	1	0	1

The findings raised questions in relation to communication between staff within schools. SENCOs responses indicated that they presumed certain conversations and activities were occurring that were perhaps not. This was demonstrated most notably by the data for non-teaching time activities. Additionally, the data indicated that teachers and TAs conferred most frequently with staff at their own level, for example, TAs indicated liaising with specialist teacher support staff, whilst teachers did not and not all teachers liaised with TAs, even when TAs worked in their classes: two teachers who did not report any consultations with TAs, indicated having part time TAs in their classes for three hours per day. Time was reported to be a barrier in this respect. Teachers did, however, liaise with other teachers and with specialist teachers.

Other preparation that was believed by SENCOs to be useful in preparing for pupils with MLD, was to involve children as far as possible and undertake appropriate CPD activities. Teachers supported the latter suggestion, and

added that support with creating resources and planning would be useful, in addition to access to more appropriate learning resources.

One TA indicated that time with other professionals and to prepare resources would be helpful, having recorded that non-teaching time activities were restricted to ‘consultation with teacher’. Another TA reported that meetings with the SENCO and outside agencies would be helpful, having previously indicated that these activities were happening.

7.3.9.3 Pedagogy

The most common form of support for pupils in the classroom was reported to be the TA. Specialist teachers and inclusion managers were also mentioned by parents, SENCOs and teachers.

If a child had a statement, funding provided one-to-one support from a TA, for fifteen hours per week. As part of a group, the support ranged from half an hour to three hours per day. It was noted that a TA may work with a child in a concentrated way for one or two weeks and then move to support another child. Further support came from learning mentors who provided up to an hour per day and were described as worth their weight in gold by one SENCO. Teachers reported differentiating the curriculum and setting in place intervention strategies to support pupils’ individual learning needs.

All TAs provided one-to-one and/or group support for children outside the classroom. These sessions covered literacy, maths and some speech and language therapy, and took from approximately one and a half, to eight hours of a TAs time each week. In one school there was a general principle that children were not withdrawn from classes. Other teachers reported children doing group and one-to-one sessions for maths, literacy, social skills and phonics.

Head teachers were asked about the action taken to support low attaining pupils. All referred to the use of a range of data, previously discussed, to identify and monitor needs, allocate resources, set in place intervention strategies and involve LA services.

All parents indicated that their children were taught as part of the whole class and in small group sessions to support literacy and maths; an approach they supported. Benefits were identified in relation to confidence, understanding and a lack of distractions in small groups.

When asked whether children might benefit from more assistance in class, SENCOs and teachers indicated that more trained staff would be useful, whilst TAs referred to resources, individual and group work and more focused, differentiated activity.

7.3.9.4 Pupil involvement

Four SENCOs and four teachers said that pupils were involved in meetings relating to their education. In most cases, pupils were reported to be actively involved in target setting and discussed this with teachers, but did not attend meetings. In one school older pupils did attend meetings. Once agreed and discussed, SENCOs and teachers reported that targets are written in child friendly language in children's books. They were referred to, explained, focused upon in class, and discussed with children regularly. Participants reported that they provided feedback and modelling of success criteria, children were encouraged to self assess, general class assessments provided data on progress, and in one case, specific interventions were tracked.

All teachers and four SENCOs indicated that children participated in: school councils, class decisions, pupil questionnaires, and could be class representatives or school monitors.

7.3.10 Social inclusion

Children with MLD were described as having a tendency to opt out of learning in the classroom, and to develop a reliance on adult support. Low self esteem was noted as an issue as children got older. Poor listening and communication skills could compound their difficulties in accessing the curriculum, leading to frustration and displays of temper.

In social situations, children with MLD may be less able to deal with challenges. Poor communication and social skills could leave them isolated, and unable to understand how to integrate into a group. One TA noted that a child with MLD tended to be the 'chaser' in games, but struggled with the role.

Schools had in place, various mechanisms to support children in these situations such as learning mentors, peer mediation and work buddies. Parents indicated that their children had generally integrated well with their peers.

7.4 Discussion

The features used by professionals to describe inclusion reflected a value perspective that favoured skilled teaching in mainstream settings. However, benefits of inclusion were not described in academic achievement, rather in terms of social cohesion.

The disadvantages of inclusion (who suffers) reflected current practical dilemmas: tensions between supporting an increasing population of pupils with MLD, whilst addressing the standards agenda; the dilemma of treating children equally or the same, and the mainstream versus special school debate.

There appeared to be three perspectives of inclusion in operation: one that focused on the scholastic environment; another that focused on a more just or equal society; a third that pointed up the contradictions and ambiguities it

created in practice. This reflected the findings of Croll and Moses (2000) who identified that some people approach inclusion as an ideal not related to current practice (section 2.2).

One dilemma that was evident from the findings was that of whether to treat children the same, or to provide equal opportunity. The ideological view suggested that individual needs were met in an inclusive environment. In practice dilemmas were evident. It was suggested that pupils without SEN were disadvantaged, either because they were not supported to the degree that pupils with MLD were supported, or because the diversity of needs was too great to be managed.

Differentiating the curriculum was identified as a feature of IE and is key in meeting individual needs. The moderate view was expressed that some children continued to need special provision, for the reason that they could not access the curriculum and were not learning. This implies a failure on the part of the pupil (medical model perspective), as opposed to a failure to sufficiently differentiate and address environmental barriers to learning (social model perspective).

In one school, teachers were allocated equally between pupils, TAs according to need. Whilst this suggested an approach based on the provision of equal opportunity, it implied that a pupil with MLD would receive the same amount of teacher time as their peers and their additional needs would be met by the less qualified TA.

If differentiation of the curriculum was insufficient to meet the individual needs of all pupils and pupils with MLD received additional support from TAs, rather than teachers, equality of opportunity was unlikely to be achieved. Saunders (1985 cited in Bowe *et al*, 1992) suggested that in some situations people absorb policy into existing practice, without making any changes. The evidence may support this view. Policy was reflected in rhetoric, but possibly not in practice, perhaps because pupils with MLD were considered to be a source of stress for teachers, who lacked specialist advice, support and resources.

Defining MLD presented a further dilemma. Evidence demonstrated the wide range of type and severity of need perceived to be incorporated within MLD. The views grouped according to job role appeared to be related to some degree to the interaction between the role and the child. Primary TAs work closely with children with MLD performing tasks and so would be most likely to notice features that are common in that situation: poor concentration and comprehension. Teachers, in assessing and planning, would note individual difficulties with subject knowledge and learning skills. SENCOs, being responsible for all children with SEN may have a view of salient features across the group, although in working with individuals they equally recognised individual traits such as low self-esteem.

Participants, particularly teachers, referred to language and communication difficulties, medical issues and EBD as features of MLD. This reflected the findings of Norwich and Kelly (2005) (section 1.3). It could be argued that

these are groups in their own right, as MLD is a group, each having features of its own. Whether it is therefore appropriate to list them as features of MLD, could be debated. It may suggest that each, combined with other factors, falls within the MLD group.

The reason for defining MLD is to inform good practice and identify effective interventions. Perhaps, rather than defining what is included in MLD, it might be better to start from an understanding of what is not, since it was referred to previously by the LA PEP as a “catch-all” group. If the purpose of definition is to identify effective provision, it would seem appropriate to remove from the group, diagnosed conditions such as those mentioned above, autism and dyslexia that already have recognised interventions.

Other tensions were caused by inclusive practice. Schools were required to provide equitably for all pupils, whilst some parents used the SEN Code of Practice(DfES, 2001) to demand more. This demonstrates the inequity in the law, discussed previously. Schools work to support all pupils, however, legislation entitles some parents to demand more.

In addition, there was evidence to suggest that greater communication between practitioners within schools could be beneficial to pupils with MLD. Communication appeared to be restricted by job role status and there was discrepancy between what was thought to happen in practice for pupils with MLD and actual practice.

The majority of schools reported having in place thorough processes for identifying and addressing training needs. However, SENCOs were unimpressed by the support they received and to a lesser degree the support received by teachers. They also indicated a lack of training in relation to induction. If the process of identifying training needs was being conducted thoroughly, these issues should have been addressed. In view of previous discussion, communication weaknesses may provide a possible reason for few CPD opportunities being taken up: there appeared to be a lack of clarity amongst job roles about exactly what was available.

A disadvantage of the survey was demonstrated to be that participants can give inconsistent responses. Providing possible answers invites people to tick the boxes, so there is a reliance on participants' clarity of thought and goodwill in their completion. This was demonstrated on a couple of occasions, one being when a TA reported that meetings with the SENCO and outside agencies would be helpful, having previously indicated that these activities were taking place. In a lengthy questionnaire such discrepancies can happen.

7.5 Conclusion

The survey data provided an overview of provision for pupils with MLD. It highlighted discrepancies between descriptions of IE and current practice. Tensions and dilemmas were evident for practitioners in trying to balance the needs of all pupils in terms of allocating resources (when the law favours children with statements) and meeting individual needs in the classroom. It

also demonstrated the difficulty of identifying MLD and the impact of the failure to do so on practice.

This evidence suggested that whilst policy was acknowledged, it had not necessarily caused a change in practice. Participants' reflected policy when describing inclusion, however, some practice did not appear to meet individual needs. Responses indicated a continuing moderate view of inclusion. It was reported that enacting policy required resources, however to wait for this before changing practice would delay the policy process. This evidence demonstrated the complexity and unpredictability of moving policy text into practical enactment.

The findings from this data informed the questions put to school participants in interviews. The data collected at that stage is discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 8

SCHOOL INTERVIEW EVIDENCE

8.0 Introduction

The previous chapter examined data gathered from the survey of primary schools. It highlighted issues faced in primary settings, such as time and resource constraints, communication difficulties, identifying and defining MLD, the mix of positive and negative outcomes from IE, and the issues of training to improve teaching and learning.

This chapter analyses data collected from interviews with school-based participants. It takes the issues mentioned above and examines these from the perspective of different participants across different settings and stages, from the Foundation Stage to KS4.

8.1 Aims

The analysis of this school data informs the following research questions:

2. How do schools (head teachers and teachers) implement the policy regarding the inclusion of pupils with MLD?
3. What are the experiences of teachers and pupils with MLD in special and inclusive settings?

In addition to addressing these questions, the continuous policy cycle (Bowe *et al*, 1992) will be examined further from the perspective of the context of practice, in relation to the implementation of LA policy in schools, and subsequent redress to the LA.

8.2 Methods

8.2.1 Participants

Four schools were involved with this stage of the data collection: a nursery, one primary, one secondary school and a special school (secondary and primary).

In each setting, interviews were sought with: head teacher, SENCO/inclusion manager, teacher, TA. Data were collected during twenty one, one-to-one interviews, and one focus group; twenty three participants in total. For the purposes reporting the findings in this chapter the following group terms will be used: head and deputy head teachers will be referred to as head teachers; SENCOs and Inclusion Managers will have the group term SENCOs; TAs, nursery education workers and nursery nurses will be referred to as TAs. The following abbreviations are used it tables: head teacher/deputy head teacher (H/T), SENCO/inclusion manager (S), teacher (T), TA.

Table 8.1 indicates participants by job role and school, and identifies whether they were involved in a one-to-one or group interview.

Table 8.1: participants by job role and school..

	One-to-one interviews				
School	H/T	S	T	TA	Other methods
G	1	1	2	1	One group of three TAs (one participant also did a one-to-one interview)
H	1	2	2	1	
I	1	1	3	2	
J	1		1	1	
Total	4	4	8	5	2 additional participants

8.2.2 Material

The schedules used for these interviews varied according to job role. The questions asked and roles to which they were addressed are shown as Appendix C. They incorporated aspects of inclusion, such as: what participants identified as key elements of IE; benefits or otherwise of inclusive practice; aspects of the parent partnership; the effectiveness of multi-agency working; recruitment; training focus and opportunities; aspects of teaching/supporting pupils with MLD in the classroom, and social issues for pupils with MLD in school. The schedule provided a guide for the interview.

8.2.3 Procedure

Having received consent from head teachers to conduct the research in settings, interviews were organised either through the SENCOs or directly with participants. Where a job role had more than one jobholder, the SENCO or head teacher selected participants.

Issues of consent, anonymity and confidentiality were addressed, as described in Chapter 3 and interviews conducted using a voice recorder. Complete transcripts were provided to participants for them to check and if appropriate, alter and return.

8.2.4 Analysis

Interview transcripts were analysed with the research questions in mind, an a priori approach. Data were extracted from each transcript and recorded under appropriate question headings (Appendix O). The data within each heading was further divided into relevant sub-groups. The refined data were then tabulated, cross-referencing it against job roles. That is, each individual piece of information was recorded against the job role that provided it.

The resulting tabulated data provided a means to identify the views of participants about aspects of the research questions by: whole group, job role, individual and school. This process facilitated the identification of common themes. A second level of analysis identified the emergent themes of: impact of setting size and layout on pupils; use of group working; impact of behaviour on learning, and the co-location of special and mainstream settings.

8.3 Results

8.3.1 Participants

Leadership teams consisted of experienced practitioners. Of the head teachers interviewed, one had previously been a SENCO, another was a teacher of the deaf and had a LA role, and a third had mainstream and special school experience. SENCOs were experienced teachers prior to taking up their roles. Although one was newly appointed, the remainder had been in situ for two or more years.

All teachers were experienced practitioners and familiar with having pupils with MLD in their classes. Length of time in the role varied for TAs from one to twenty two years. Experience ranged from entry with no qualifications, to prior experience as both nursery nurse and learning mentor.

8.3.2 The pupils: characteristics of MLD

Characteristics of MLD as described by participants are shown in table 8.2.

Analysis revealed an inability to define MLD specifically, and a lack of clarity regarding who was included in the category. The descriptions provided an overall view of pupils with MLD as quiet, lacking in confidence and self-esteem; often struggling, but preferring not to draw attention to themselves by asking

for help. The deputy head teacher spoke of the “invisible ones”, which from the data, would appear to be an accurate description.

Table 8.2: Characteristics of MLD

	H/T			S/IM			T			TA			Total		
Secondary (S); Primary (P); Special (Sp)	S	P	Sp	S	P	Sp	S	P	Sp	S	P	Sp	S	P	Sp
Identified issues with:															
Language and communication problems (expressive/receptive/ alphabet/sounds)		1		1	1			1	2				1	3	2
Could be acting out (behavioural)		1	1											1	1
Visual/auditory problems (medical)					1									1	
Global difficulties:															
Cognitive delay					2									2	
General delay					1			2						3	
Working at a much lower level; need work substantially differentiated.		1						1						2	
Measures:															
Literacy, numeracy well below average				1	1		2						3	1	
Get stuck on a level whilst peers move on								1						1	
Difficulties with subject knowledge and learning skills:															
Lack of understanding; need visual cues, stepped instructions		1			1		1	1	1	1			2	3	1
Unable to develop skills already taught					1									1	
Fine motor skills (possibly gross)					1									1	
May appear to follow session, respond verbally, but cannot transfer to paper							2						2		
Sequencing difficulties									1						1
Short term memory problems									1						1
Distracted/poor concentration								2	1	1	1	1	1	3	2
Characteristics															
Lacking good friendships		1												1	
Low self-esteem, confidence, withdrawn		1	1	1									1	1	1
Socially, want to be with the ‘in’ crowd										1			1		

Data indicated that at primary age, pupils with MLD struggled in every aspect of their education: physically; cognitively, and socially. At secondary age, descriptors focused on poor comprehension, literacy and numeracy skills.

Common factors across all settings were: language and communication difficulties; poor comprehension and concentration; low self-esteem and confidence, and a tendency to be quiet or withdrawn. The secondary deputy head teacher reported that lists of pupils' under-performing or misbehaving, rarely included pupils with MLD alone.

It emerged from the data that in secondary and primary settings, teachers observed pupils who could not read or write, remaining quiet, pretending that they could do it; alternatively they would "shut down", or become anti-social. The deputy head teacher commented that the "invisible pupils" were always the ones they needed to be looking out for.

It also emerged that pupils became aware of their difficulties and difference to their peers around years 5 and 6, when SATs preparation began.

8.3.3 Numbers of pupils with MLD

In the secondary school and nursery, the identification of difficulties was reported to have improved. Participants did not identify significant changes in numbers of pupils with MLD, although those with emotional and behavioural difficulties were considered to have increased. In the nursery, the head

teacher noted a significant reduction in pupils with special needs, possibly because environmental issues had been addressed; the teacher observed more pupils with speech and language delay and behavioural issues.

A special school TA perceived a change in the special school population from MLD to severe learning difficulties.

8.3.4 Relationships

Head teachers reported that whilst many pupils with MLD had lots of friends, some lacked good quality friendships. Two head teachers said that pupils did not understand the concept of friendship, or know how to be acceptable to, or accepted by, a group that did not know them well. Mainstream provision was felt by one secondary teacher and the special school head teacher, to offer pupils the prospect of developing a wider range of friends.

One nursery child was reported to have developed sufficiently to be aware of other pupils, and to know what he was missing. His desire for someone to play with, was the greatest motivation to develop his skills.

The special school inclusion manager considered that pupils in mainstream developed socially more quickly, whereas in special school they found peers at their own level, and made friends. However, a primary teacher also observed that pupils with difficulties had friends they veered towards, who tended to be of similar ability.

Nursery and primary participants highlighted the need to involve pupils in understanding that people were good at different things, and needed to support each other. Special school teachers commented that secondary aged pupils were supportive of pupils in the primary. However, a special school teacher commented that pupils struggled to understand how to react in social situations, making them targets for bullying in mainstream environments. It was also reported that some mainstream secondary pupils with MLD who had social difficulties, used the library and corridors of the SEN unit, as a safe environment to go to during breaks.

Secondary TAs observed that pupils with MLD wanted to be part of the "in crowd" and would join in with peers and "be cool" in class when they could continue working.

8.3.5 The schools: overview of provision in settings

Participants were questioned about specific aspects of provision, however, from the data there emerged an indication of the overall approach taken by each school to meeting SEN.

8.3.5.1 Nursery

The staff had a strong team approach to the care and education of the pupils, demonstrated by the decision not to have a role dedicated to SEN provision, and the inclusion of all staff in understanding the needs of each child and

providing for them. Attention was given to the environment; removing or reducing barriers to learning. An inclusive curriculum enabled all pupils to access and learn from all activities.

8.3.5.2 Primary

The primary school was engaged in a long-term review of SEN. SEN provision at that point, was provided mainly by the SENCO, supported by TAs. Teachers, unsure of their own abilities and unclear about the practical application of inclusion, relied heavily on the SENCO. The head teacher had a strong sense of direction for future provision, starting with strengthening classroom practice through teachers and TAs.

8.3.5.3 Secondary

The secondary school had the benefit of an established, focused SEN unit with a team of trained TAs, directed by the SENCO. Teachers were trained to address environmental issues in classrooms, and encouraged to take risks in learning, to find out what inspired pupils to learn. However, there was a sense that overall responsibility for pupils lay with the SENCO.

An emergent theme particular to secondary schools was that busy timetables and large sites meant lots of movement, which often proved difficult. Teachers described how pupils got lost and sometimes relied on peers to guide them.

8.3.5.4 Special school

Special school participants referred to the provision of a small environment and high adult-to-child ratios to facilitate support; pupils struggling were quickly identified. The secondary teacher spoke of using small group work to involve pupils and to encourage them to focus on what they were able to achieve.

The quality of relationships was important; the secondary teacher commented that as in a family they had to set limits, find ways of living together and coping with difference, and deal with difficulties in order to move forward.

8.3.6 Mainstream grouping strategy

This section applies mainly to secondary schools as primary classes were typically mixed ability. One secondary teacher was concerned that during Years 7 and 8 pupils with SEN tended to coast; spread across large classes and not receiving targeted support. In Year 9, pupils were grouped by ability. Foundation groups were small, encompassed a narrower range of abilities, facilitated the targeting of support and led to faster progress. This approach was favoured by the special school inclusion manager in mainstream settings. The mainstream teacher reported that pupils hid their difficulties when placed in mixed ability classes, with peers who could do the work.

Another secondary teacher reported that setting by ability did not support pupils' self-esteem or self-perception. Setting by ability in Year 9, had resulted

in pupils in lower ability groups being labelled by their peers, and a change in expectations amongst teachers. Pupils with MLD, it was considered, could benefit from being in classes with a broader range of abilities. Having literacy needs, did not necessarily prevent them from understanding and processing the lesson. They could participate in and benefit from discussion; the key was in knowing pupils, using the data, and planning and preparing for them.

8.3.7 Working in groups in class

Working in groups was an emergent theme. Views about working in groups in secondary mainstream classrooms varied; some teachers used group activities, usually grouping by ability. Another, tended to avoid group work with Year 9 classes; different abilities, learning difficulties and behaviour issues meant that pupils struggled to work together; paired working was preferred. Secondary TAs noted the importance of stepping back and allowing pupils to integrate themselves into groups, when working in the classroom.

In the special school, the secondary teacher utilised the experience of TAs to facilitate small group working in class, providing opportunities for the TA and teacher to swap around.

8.3.8 Withdrawal sessions

Pupils in all settings were taken out for occasional one-to-one and/or group work. Evidence indicated that withdrawal was in relation to specific activities,

such as, language and social skills, numeracy and literacy. Particular programmes, such as 'Catch Up', were felt to be important, because they were manageable.

Primary practitioners' views were mixed: a teacher observed that the pupils were happiest when they were taken out of the classroom. The inclusion manager did not feel that pupils liked being taken from the class; the head teacher did not favour withdrawal and considered that pupils enjoyed withdrawal sessions for the wrong reasons. Other primary participants identified benefits such as, providing a quiet working environment away from the distractions of the classroom. The SENCO commented that working with pupils in small groups in the classroom wasted time; the teacher was doing one thing, and they were doing another. The secondary deputy head considered withdrawal sessions gave pupils time to reflect and over-learn. The outreach teacher considered that one-to-one sessions could make a difference and boost a pupil's self-esteem.

There was agreement amongst secondary participants that whilst pupils should not be withdrawn too frequently, they did benefit from sessions outside the classroom, but this was not appropriate all of the time. One TA said that if they were in the mainstream, there was no point in constantly taking them out of class, however, they could not be in a lesson if they could not access the work.

Secondary teachers could see the benefits of focused support. TAs perceived that teachers were relieved when pupils were taken out of lessons, particularly

where there were behavioural issues. One primary teacher felt that pupils benefitted from working at a level that they could understand; it created less pressure for them and for the teacher.

Secondary TAs and the SENCO, considered that where pupils had similar abilities and issues, they could provide each other with peer support in the classroom, thereby increasing their confidence.

8.3.9 Common teaching strategies

Teachers and SENCOs were asked how they met individual needs and what support pupils with MLD received in the classroom. The strategies were many and varied. Differentiation and the use of visual cues were recommended by the greatest number of job roles and across settings. Other strategies related more to age and ability, for example, tactile activities were referred to for younger pupils; special school participants had alternative activities ready to match the mood of pupils. The strategies commonly referred to are discussed below.

8.3.9.1 Differentiation

Differentiation was a strategy referred to across job roles and settings. Teachers described differentiating up to five or six times per lesson. The primary SENCO observed that in most classes, teachers worked on the basis of top, middle and lower groups, and differentiated and planned for those. The

nursery teacher looked for activities that interested pupils and developed those to support their learning.

The primary SENCO described situations where teachers did their best to enable all pupils to access the curriculum, however, situations occurred where writing tasks were set, but one child did not know their letters, or lower ability work was provided, but pupils were left alone to complete it. The SENCO reported that placid pupils in this situation would not cause problems, however, neither would they learn; more support was needed.

A primary teacher questioned whether everything should be differentiated, or whether pupils with difficulties should have more time for learning literacy and numeracy. She suggested that they should be able to plan for what they needed, rather than to include all pupils for the sake of it.

Secondary TAs referred to being required to differentiate work, sometimes as they arrived in class. The SENCO commented that lessons needed to have that level of differentiation that enabled every child to succeed, and teachers spoke of using different, or more structured tasks, and/or different instructions to bring all pupils to the same outcome. The special school and primary head teachers explained the importance of providing pupils with appropriate tasks to meet individual needs

The primary head teacher and special school secondary teacher agreed; topic learning provided pupils with opportunities to do practical tasks that interested individual pupils.

8.3.9.2 Resources

Mainstream, special school and nursery teachers commented that it was important to have a range of resources available. The special school teacher also highlighted the need for flexibility in terms of being ready to change activity depending on the mood of the class

The use of visual supports were frequently referred to. Nursery, primary and secondary participants spoke of the value of the interactive whiteboard, referring to it as a good stimulus. Further visual resources such as picture cues, Makaton signs and symbols, photographs, and letter blocks were used in the primary and special schools.

8.3.9.3 Flexibility during lessons

Secondary and special school teachers spoke of the need to allow pupils to move about during lessons, either in the classroom or by moving between rooms. The latter also remarked on the importance of teachers moving about the class to support pupils and maintain focus.

A secondary teacher reported that a fifty minute lesson was ideal and allowed pupils to cope and to produce something. One secondary TA suggested that teachers sometimes spent too long talking in lessons, reducing the opportunity for TAs to explain the topic and support pupils. They estimated that it took pupils with special needs about twenty minutes to warm up to a topic. The special school secondary TA reported that pupils could not concentrate for longer than fifteen minutes. Some special school pupils took time to build up their participation in class to the point where they were able to remain for the full lesson.

8.3.10 Targets and expectations

Participants across job roles and settings reported rigorous monitoring of data for the purposes of planning, analysing and evaluating school and individual performance, ensuring pupils were coping and closing gaps in learning.

There was a view amongst SENCOs that IEPs were another layer of bureaucracy and hard to manage, and one teacher commented that sometimes targets were only checked for the purposes of the review.

the head teacher reported that the special school had mainstream expectations. The secondary deputy head teacher said that they expected “great things” of their pupils whilst understanding their limitations.

8.3.11 Teaching style

During discussions about meeting individual needs in the classroom, the importance of teaching style emerged. The special school secondary TA reported that lessons needed to be happy and jolly; pupils learned more when they were having fun.

The secondary deputy head teacher also referred to the ability of the SENCO to make learning fun for pupils, and commented that a lot of the pupils did very well.

8.3.12 Behaviour issues

Although the behaviour of pupils with MLD was not a focus of the interview questions, an emergent theme was behaviour issues that dominated classrooms and caused other pupils to suffer in terms of their educational achievement. The special school secondary teacher described teachers giving their attention to pupils with challenging behaviour and effectively ignoring those working quietly. A secondary teacher agreed, stating that pupils with behavioural issues effectively excluded other pupils.

Special school TAs perceived that the special school population had changed and more pupils had behavioural issues, for which staff were not trained.

8.3.13 Transition

SENCOs, TAs, learning mentors and tutors, were all considered to have an important role in transition; ensuring a manageable change for pupils.

Transition from nursery to primary, and primary to secondary was a cause for concern to teachers whose pupils were moving on; they perceived that previous good practice may not be continued, and that information prepared for the receiving schools may not be read; secondary schools were believed to rely on their own assessments.

The annual transition conference, which the primary head teacher suggested that this could be better, provided an opportunity for transfers to be discussed. Whilst the secondary SENCO found the conference useful, she and a teacher reported that, in addition to transfer information, they conducted their own assessments. Some pupils were still believed to slip through the net during the transfer process.

The option of split placements was considered by the head teacher and outreach teacher to confuse pupils, and the outreach teacher commented that former friends could become unkind. Split placements were felt to indicate that parents were undecided.

8.3.14 Communicating with parents

The quality of the school parent partnership was considered to impact on the effectiveness of education by all participants. Good communication benefitted all parties: nursery and special school staff spoke of understanding the home situation, and building consistency between home and school boundaries.

Communicating sensitively with parents was recognised as important and a secondary teacher suggested that training was necessary for this role. Participants spoke of helping parents to come to terms with their pupils' difficulties; being honest, but not negative, as some had unrealistic expectations.

One participant reported that they recommended to parents to be persistent if they wanted a statement; whilst they did not agree with it, parents who made the most noise received the most support.

Participants in primary, secondary and special settings reported some barriers to communicating with parents. SENCOs and teachers commented on parents' own learning difficulties and negative experiences of school, which in some instances, caused parents to undermine teachers. Teachers spoke of the failure of parents to attend meetings, frequently those with whom they most needed to communicate.

Various methods were used to communicate with parents: face-to-face, telephone and written, although at secondary level, there was less face-to-face contact.

8.3.15 SEN budgets

A desire for more TAs, resources and funding was expressed across job roles. It was reported that there were competing priorities for funds, and head teachers described their need to stretch money as far as possible. The primary head teacher described having to choose providers of professional services that achieved the best value for money, and decide which job roles to fill to maintain effectiveness. The need to prioritise spending affected pupils directly; one-to-one support was provided when an IEP required this, otherwise pupils received a mix of support.

In the secondary school, the SENCO described her role as ensuring that the school received adequate resources. Grants were applied for and opportunities found to take advantage of collaborative working with external services for the benefit of pupils, for example with speech and language therapy. Individual needs were examined and the total provision shared accordingly and as effectively as possible. Statement funding was used to benefit other pupils at the same time as the statemented child, for example, one-to-one sessions were not always appropriate for adolescent pupils, and so small group provision was used, thus benefitting several pupils. Putting pupils together in small groups was felt to offer good value. The deputy head teacher

commented: "…you stretch and cajole money out of as many pots as you can. You mix and match your provision so that you're hitting as many pupils as possible…But it's an ever-ongoing problem.".

8.3.16 Staff: recruitment

TAs were recruited from a range of backgrounds, for example, the primary school occasionally recruited parents to TA positions, recognising that they were needy and required a substantial amount of training and guidance. The secondary school employed different levels of TAs; graduates gaining experience, and less qualified people who worked well with pupils.

8.3.17 Identifying training needs, disseminating information and evaluation

Across settings the identification of training to support the curriculum or meet other school objectives, was dealt with informally by head teachers, subject coordinators and individuals. The primary school additionally referred to the school improvement plan and an SEN audit.

Training outcomes were disseminated either in writing, or verbally during staff meetings, INSET days, and discussions with peers. The special school head teacher spoke of building training outcomes into school practice. The primary head teacher encouraged teachers away from the view of training as a course.

Across settings the methods described for evaluating training were informal; discussion with attendees, and completion of forms, that were occasionally forgotten. Three head teachers indicated that evaluation of training was not well established and they were working to improve that aspect; one observed that staff lacked the knowledge to do it.

8.3.18 Training and support

8.3.18.1 SENCO/inclusion managers

Four participants in different job roles recognised the benefits of networking; offering opportunities to share resources, ideas, and expertise within, and between settings. However, one SENCO commented on the lack of networking opportunities available.

The LA SENCO meetings were referred to unfavourably by special and primary participants, who stated that they were not very good; not relevant so pointless; not well attended; provided nothing for inclusion managers. The secondary SENCO reported positively on the meetings.

SENCOs learned much of their role whilst carrying it out. They were supported by EPs and undertook some training, such as, an induction course attended by one inclusion manager, and courses to support specific difficulties, for example, dyslexia and ASD. The secondary SENCO reported receiving a lot

of training early in the role and having a good mentor. She believed that it was important to empower oneself to develop and find opportunities for learning.

8.3.18.2 Teachers

The outreach service, LA advisory teachers and SENCOs were identified as sources of support and guidance to teachers.

The nursery identified and supported difficulties in practice as they arose, using professionals to conduct in-house training when needs were identified and also on a regular basis. The secondary SENCO provided in-house training on a range of topics, such as, the learning environment, and conducted twilight sessions for newly qualified teachers on differentiation. Special school participants referred to courses they had attended: a one year module on specific learning difficulties, post-graduate study in dyslexia.

8.3.18.3 TAs

A special school teacher and the primary head teacher indicated that TAs needed a better training programme. Time was raised as an issue; TAs tended not to be available after school. The special school reported difficulties in releasing TAs for daytime training, although others were able to accommodate this. A primary teacher was concerned that TAs were not trained to support pupils with special needs.

TAs across settings reported having access to a range of training: curriculum; behaviour, and SEN. They were encouraged to complete higher level TA qualifications, and NVQs. In the special school, TAs also took GCSEs, and three had trained as teachers.

8.3.19 TA role in the classroom

The secondary deputy head teacher and nursery teacher commented that TAs were a valuable resource for discussing activities and pupils' individual progress. In the nursery, the teacher created a learning environment and set in place appropriate activities, the purposes of which were clear to the TAs, who supported all pupils continually, whilst having specific responsibilities in certain areas.

A primary teacher reported that support was slightly haphazard. Classes did have TAs who gave general support in the classroom and provided additional support out of the classroom.

In the secondary school TAs operated from the SEN unit, supporting pupils in classes and withdrawal sessions. Secondary TAs perceived that teachers did not understand the intensity of their role, and that some believed them to be general helpers, or to deal with behaviour.

The primary and special school inclusion managers referred to the relationships built between TAs and pupils; the latter adding that pupils needed to feel that they could trust TAs. Secondary TAs reported that they made

pupils felt secure; they were there to promote independence. The primary head teacher thought they supported pupils too much, causing them to become dependent.

Teachers across settings referred to the importance of liaising with TAs, however, the amount of liaison that occurred varied. Regular meetings ensured nursery TAs were fully conversant with pupils' needs and able to support individuals appropriately. Primary and secondary teachers reported organisation and time issues hindered communication.

Teachers and TAs in the special school had time to liaise, although this happened less at secondary level, where TAs were experienced.

8.3.20 Multi-agency working

Mainstream head teachers referred to multi-agency working as the way forward, and essential for IE; secondary and special school SENCOs referred to it as excellent, a big step in the right direction, and special and nursery teachers found it useful to share information. It was suggested by the secondary SENCO that pupils had previously fallen through gaps, where no-one had taken responsibility. The nursery teacher valued access to external agencies without which it was easy to become isolated and insular.

8.3.21 External services

There was concern regarding a lack of time allocated by services to mainstream schools, in particular EPs and speech and language therapy. The latter were reported to result in visible progress in pupils. One primary teacher commented that pupils would have been further ahead if they had more specialist time. In relation to EPs, occupational therapy and the language and communication team feedback was positive, however, a primary SENCO and teacher each referred to the need for practical support for pupils, as opposed to professionals providing activities to be completed in school.

8.3.22 Outreach service

Data identified a desire amongst mainstream settings to work with the outreach service. The special school head teacher and outreach teacher reported that the service needed to help schools to build on their own practice, increase confidence, and make teachers feel less desperate and more supported.

8.3.23 What inclusion means

Descriptions of inclusion made reference mainly to academic rather than social inclusion: pupils achieving their potential; being successful; being included through curriculum planning and differentiation, and enjoying the environment, ethos and learning together. One mainstream SENCO took an human rights

approach to inclusion, stating that every child had a right to learn and play in an environment with all pupils, whatever their needs.

Other descriptions demonstrated participants' concern to be fair to all pupils, stating that all pupils should be included equally, or that equal opportunities should be provided for all regardless of needs. However, the primary head teacher noted that it was almost impossible to achieve inclusion where benefits were equal to all.

With regards to social inclusion, the nursery teacher commented that young pupils were very malleable and sociable and could be made aware of how they should behave towards each other. The primary inclusion manager said that inclusion benefitted everyone.

The special school inclusion manager commented that inclusion might make mainstream pupils more open to people with learning difficulties, whilst for special school pupils, it provided some understanding of the real world. However, a special school TA interpreted inclusion to mean transferring pupils to mainstream education, which she believed, was not always successful.

Participants as a group, stated that inclusion required access to specialist support and advice, and sufficient help and resources. A secondary teacher noted that SEN departments were expensive to run, and drained resources from other areas, however, this was considered to be a price worth paying for IE.

8.3.24 Mainstream or special provision

Although in principal inclusion was considered to have benefits for all concerned, particularly in relation to social development, participants across job roles and settings voiced their concerns about the practicality of it: there were some pupils whose needs were complex and could not be met in mainstream provision; mainstream classes were large and teachers could not manage the numbers of pupils with MLD; inclusion required resources, support and small classes; inclusion had a negative effect on pupils' self-esteem; pupils in special schools were vulnerable to being placed in situations that were not as safe for them as special schools.

The primary head teacher commented that at the point of transfer to secondary, teachers knew some pupils would not survive in the mainstream, and so looked to special education. This was regarded as a particularly difficult decision and guidance was needed. The special school head teacher was concerned that at primary age, it was suggested to parents that the answer to their child's needs lay in special education, when they should have been told to look at a variety of settings, to find the school that most suited their needs.

The special school head teacher explained that they provided a secondary model of education; pupils moved between lessons and classrooms, but on a smaller scale that pupils could manage. High adult-to-child ratios resulted in the provision of a level of targeted support that few secondary schools could

offer. Hence, from an academic perspective, the head teacher considered that the same child doing the same thing would do better in a special setting. However, she added that pupils with learning and cognition difficulties alone, could manage in a mainstream setting with support. A view reiterated by special school TAs and the secondary deputy head teacher.

An emergent theme was that co-location was considered to be a better option by the special school head teacher and inclusion manager, allowing special school pupils to benefit from a mainstream experience and access to a broader curriculum. The special school environment was described as almost perfect for the pupils, however, it did not give a realistic impression of the world.

8.4 Discussion

Mainstream and special provision each offered benefits for pupils with MLD. There was a perception that mainstream provision supported social development, however, evidence suggested that mainstream may not have been any better than special provision in this regard. Special provision could provide a small environment with targeted support, however, mainstream teachers indicated that foundation groups were small, and special school participants agreed that with targeted support from year 7, some pupils with MLD could manage in mainstream. The curriculum available in the mainstream was broad, however, special school participants questioned the value of the curriculum when pupils needed to learn the skills necessary to live and work in society.

Mainstream was the inclusive option; however, settings were at very different stages in the development of inclusive practice. It was evident that those schools with head teachers experienced in SEN provision, were the most advanced in inclusive practice. Evidence indicated that mainstream provision could be strengthened for pupils with SEN by addressing the issues discussed in terms of a team approach, focusing on individual knowledge and skills and the creation of a cohesive team built around pupils with MLD, as opposed to SEN being an important, however separate, function.

The evidence raised the following issues for investigation, to ascertain their impact on education provision for pupils with MLD. Mixed or single ability groups are an issue for the learning of all pupils, however, it is of particular importance for pupils with MLD bearing in mind the different functioning pupils with MLD demonstrate; an issue with literacy does not necessarily indicate an issue with comprehension. Relationships can impact on pupils learning; being with lower achieving peers, some of whom may have behavioural issues, impacts on pupils with MLD in two ways; firstly from the point of view of influence and pupils with MLD copying the behaviours; secondly in terms of poor behaviour reducing the time available to support pupils' learning. It is recognised that in mixed ability groups pupils do gravitate to like peers; perhaps this indicates that pupils with MLD should be placed in a single group. Transition needs further consideration to ascertain whether teachers' fears of future education provision are well founded, and whether there is a means of gradual transition to mainstream secondary, or of a primary model of education in year 7.

8.5 Conclusion

With regards to the continuous policy cycle (Bowe *et al*, 1992), the findings indicated that the Government's policy of inclusion had filtered through to the level of practice, however, it had created confusion in schools because of the omission of any definition of what it meant in terms of practice. Settings needed to define that for themselves. The policy had not removed the belief that there remained a need for special provision from either mainstream or special participants. A positive outcome was that the inclusive agenda had caused schools to evaluate and strengthen their provision, which was supported by LA, Health and outreach services. Liaison with these services gave the LA a clear understanding of what was happening at the practice level.

The following chapter considers data provided by parents, providing a different perspective on some of the same aspects of education covered in this chapter.

CHAPTER 9

PARENT INTERVIEWS

9.0 Introduction

This chapter analyses data collected from parent interviews, providing a perspective complementary to school practitioners.

9.1 Aims

The aim was to understand educational provision for pupils with MLD from parents' perspectives.

The analysis of this data informs the following research questions:

3. What are the experiences of teachers and pupils with MLD in special and inclusive settings?
4. What are the views of the variety of stakeholders tasked with implementation of inclusion policy as practised at the school level?

The data will provide evidence of the impact that parents feel inclusive policy has on their children's education, in terms of academic achievement and social inclusion, thus illuminating further the context of practice.

9.2 Methods

9.2.1 Participants

Parents from three of the four settings were involved with this stage of the data collection: primary, secondary, and special school parents.

In each setting, interviews were sought with the parents of children who were observed; all were mothers. One had educational experience of SEN and was therefore in a position to offer both a parent's and a professional's perspective. Details of the pupils whose parents were interviewed are shown in table 9.1.

Table 9.1: information regarding participants' children.

School	Pupil Key Stage Age Year	Gender of pupil	Interview type
Mainstream secondary	KS3 Age 13 Y9	Female	Face-to-face
Mainstream primary	KS2 Age 9 Y4/5	Male	Face-to-face
Special primary	KS1 Age 6 Y2	Male	Telephone
Special primary	KS2 Age 9 Mixed group	Male	Face-to-face
Special secondary	KS3 Age 13 Y9	Female	Telephone

9.2.2 Material

Parents were questioned about their views in relation to: choice of school; identification of difficulties; experience of obtaining a statement; support that children received in the classroom; withdrawal sessions, and support received from outside the school. Views were sought about relationships with schools; whether it was felt that teachers understood children's needs, and whether or not children found it easy to integrate with their peers.

The interview schedule provided a guide for the interview (Appendix D).

9.2.3 Procedure

Permission was obtained from head teachers to conduct research in their settings (Appendices I, J). Parent interviews were either arranged in school, or by telephone at a time convenient to participants. Consent to participation was obtained form all participants (Appendices H, N). Interviews were conducted, where feasible and with permission, using a voice recorder. In both face-to-face and telephone situations, participants were sent a transcript of their interview for checking.

9.2.4 Analysis

The data were analysed at the first level using a priori categories, specifically to address the research questions (Appendix O).

At the second level of analysis the following emergent themes were identified: that parents favoured children receiving homework; were prepared to move children between settings to meet their needs; children recognised their differences by years 5 and 6; and perspectives on co-location.

9.3 Results

9.3.1 Mainstream or special education

All participants' children had current or previous experience of special provision. Two parents were advised to consider special provision; three chose it. Reasons for selecting special provision were: speech and language difficulties; fears that children would not cope in mainstream secondary environments and might be bullied; difficulty mixing with peers.

9.3.2 Choice

Although parents were able to choose special or mainstream provision, they did not necessarily have a choice of which school their child should attend.

Funding issues appeared to affect LA decisions. One parent had wanted an out-of-borough placement and another, a private school for dyslexia.

One parent indicated that if there had been an environment that matched her child's perceived needs, she would have transferred her: she considered it unfair for her daughter to take up time and resources in a mainstream classroom if a school that catered for her needs was available. She felt,

however, that pupils with MLD were not well catered for and at that time her daughter was better off in mainstream secondary provision.

9.3.3 Decision-making

Choosing the right environment was difficult. Parents of secondary-aged children considered that mainstream provision offered better opportunities for social development; special provision for academic progression.

It emerged that parents' views about future provision were not fixed; transfers were an option to meet their children's needs. One parent had moved her child between mainstream and special provision three times to find the best setting for her needs. The parent of the special school KS1 child declined a mainstream place with a speech and language unit because she felt her son was progressing well. The parent of the KS3 child intended special school to be temporary, however, her daughter progressed well and remained.

It emerged that two parents held opposing views about co-locating mainstream and special provision. One parent was in favour because it enabled children to integrate socially, whilst providing the support needed. The other opposed it: she was fearful of her child being tormented and bullied.

9.3.4 Statements

Two parents were supported in obtaining statements by their respective schools, although one felt that her inability to word a letter correctly had prevented her daughter from getting the “correct label” early in her education and resulted in the parent feeling a failure.

A third parent, who was not supported, had a difficult experience and felt that the LA let her child down. She was initially unaware that she could apply for a statement and eventually sought help from a charity that acted as an intermediary with the LA, whom she finally threatened with legal action. She believed that the process would have been easier if her child had had behavioural difficulties.

9.3.5 Nature of difficulties

Pupils’ reported difficulties covered a wide range of issues: speech and language; social withdrawal; poor memory; dyslexia; literacy difficulties, and an inability to tell the time. Parents also described things that their children were good at: “…quick at puzzles and art…”; “…good imagination and he can tell you verbally…”; good long-term memory.

An emergent theme was of children becoming aware of their differences by Year 5 (ten years). One primary child was reported to have told the SENCO that he knew he was different from other children. By year 6, the statement

had become “a label” for the secondary child. She noticed that she was working at a different level from her peers. Her parent reported that having a different arrangement, a statement and IEPs , changed her daughter’s perception of herself.

9.3.6 Identification of difficulties

Difficulties were identified for all of the children during the early or primary years. Two received support quickly. For two others the pupils’ difficulties had been recognised in the early years, however, each had failed to receive the support that parents felt was needed during their primary years, leading to gaps in learning that could not be overcome.

One parent reported that having a statement had not changed the nature of her daughter’s primary provision; “high incidence needs” were funded from the school’s budget; increasing support was not possible. She believed that had there been earlier intervention, her child would still have had MLD but would have been less alienated.

9.3.7 Bullying

For one KS2 parent bullying was a factor in school choice, and a concern in relation to a proposed co-location. Another pupil was reported to have experienced verbal and physical bullying in special and mainstream settings, whilst another parent reported that peers had been cruel.

9.3.8 Homework

Helping with homework was an emergent theme. Homework enabled parents to see what children were doing, and to support them. One parent asked, unsuccessfully, to be advised of the topics being studied so that she could support her daughter.

Another parent suggested that primary teachers did not always differentiate homework, or liaise with other teachers to control the amount of homework pupils received. Too much homework overwhelmed her son, and if unfinished he would be denied school activities such as swimming or playtime. A smaller amount was more manageable and boosted his self-esteem. One special school child was reported to enjoy having homework.

9.3.9 Avoidance strategies

One special school child was observed to have developed avoidance strategies: if he was struggling to understand in class he would:

> "…flit in and out of the toilet so he won't have to listen…because he won't know what they're talking about, he'll think "Oh I'll just skive off"…".

9.3.10 Withdrawal sessions

Parents were happy for their mainstream children to receive support outside the classroom individually or in small groups. One parent would have liked more of this support for her primary-aged son.

One parent preferred a mix of whole-class and withdrawal sessions. She felt that her secondary-aged daughter needed to learn to live in society and felt that the praise given to her daughter during withdrawal sessions, could leave her with unrealistic expectations of what she might be able to achieve; causing disappointment when her expectations were not met.

9.3.11 Teachers' understanding of children's competence

Teachers in the special school were considered by one parent to know when to push her child and in which subjects. However another special school parent perceived that her primary-aged son was not being sufficiently challenged.

Another parent indicated that whilst senior staff understood her mainstream secondary-aged child's needs, she was unsure about other teachers; with no physical disabilities, some might fail to understand her daughter's needs. This was evidenced by her daughter being made to face the wall for forgetting her trainers twice in half a term, something which her parent felt should have been the cause for celebration as previously she had forgotten her trainers every day. Administrative staff sent home letters advising that her daughter kept missing registration. However, the parent believed that this meant that either her daughter was lost, or had forgotten registration.

One parent questioned whether long association with MLD peers could impact upon a child's progress. Her son had improved noticeably when such an association ended.

9.3.12 Parental expectations

Parents of secondary-aged children appeared realistic in their expectations for their children. One parent considered that if mainstream teachers had understood the parent's expectations, they might have relaxed. She did not expect "books full of work". She would at least have liked to see her daughter writing the date and title of the lesson, detail that would have enabled her to support her daughter.

Another parent anticipated her special school daughter leaving school with a reading age of twelve years; if she could read she could cope with everything else.

9.3.13 Parent-school partnership

All parents agreed that the quality of the parent-school partnership impacted on the effectiveness of education. One parent commented that children felt comfortable and protected, in the knowledge that home and school were working together.

All of the parents of special school children reported good communication with the school. Staff used telephone and notes to inform parents; listened and responded to requests and were flexible regarding meetings. One parent felt that her secondary-aged child had progressed well there. Another parent enjoyed being involved with, and able to visit the primary section.

One parent reported that sharing information with the mainstream primary enabled her to support her son. She was complimentary about the new head teacher, who was easily accessible and supportive in “trying to get the best out of your child”.

Another parent appreciated being referred to as her secondary-aged child’s mum, rather than as the mother of the child with the statement. As her only contact was with the SENCO, this parent was unsure what it would mean for her child if the SENCO left. She had experienced a number of communication difficulties: inflexible meeting times; appointments with teachers who had not taught her daughter; failure of administrative staff to respond to contact, and disinterest in an offer to explain her daughter’s difficulties. Whilst her daughter was in special provision, she felt that she was prevented from being involved. She explained that parents go through “ordeals of emotions” and should not be shut out by schools.

9.3.14 Teacher training

One parent expressed the view that in general it was felt that SENCOs were very knowledgeable about SEN, however, they could not necessarily empathise with parents. It was suggested that part of the teacher training package should be a placement in a special school, to gain the level of understanding required to support children and their families.

9.3.15 External agencies

Speech and language therapy had been a necessity for three of the children. Special school children received support in school; mainstream parents had been required to attend clinics. One parent had missed an appointment and heard nothing from the service since. Other parents commented on the amount of appointments they were required to attend.

Another parent reported paying for her secondary special school daughter to attend a course to help her with dyslexia. Whilst the "education people" acknowledged the improvement, she felt that they claimed that this was due to school rather than attending the course.

9.3.16 Friendships

The parents of all primary-aged children reported positively regarding experiences of friendship; the children enjoyed school and liked their friends. One parent felt that special school children formed better friendships in the primary years; in nursery they would flit from one peer to another. Attendance at a mainstream after-school club had helped her son socially, by increasing his confidence.

Secondary-aged children were reported to struggle with friendships. A parent reported that her special school child was "a loner"; she had friends in school and associated with younger neighbours at home. She felt that a mainstream

education would have supported her daughter's social development, giving her confidence.

One parent commented that her mainstream secondary-aged daughter wanted to have friends, to be liked, and to be like them, but instead her peers teased her. She perceived that mainstream education supported her daughter's social development in terms of learning how to be acceptable in society, rather than supporting her in making individual friends.

9.3.17 Inclusive education

The parent of one special school primary-aged pupil described inclusion as "unfair". Children with difficulties could not keep up, felt "low about themselves" and could be "tormented by peers". She also observed that if children were unhappy, so were their parents.

Another parent described inclusion as a global experience of secondary school; not necessarily participation in lessons all of the time, but having a good balance of being present in lessons, and participating in social events. She said that secondary-aged children could benefit from being in an inclusive school and teachers could find inclusion enriching if they approached it with the right attitude. She considered however, that the benefits and disadvantages were probably not balanced. She compared inclusion in mainstream provision with a family coping with a child with SEN. Parents had no choice but to give

more attention to the child with SEN, other siblings lost out and resented their sibling.

9.4 Discussion

Participants suggested that statements were more easily obtained where parents were supported or represented, by schools or outside agencies. This reflects the Hansard texts. Failing to obtain support had a significant emotional impact on parents.

Parents faced a dilemma in selecting mainstream or special provision for their child. In effect they had to undertake a cost-benefit analysis in terms of the academic and social development opportunities provided, and take account of their child's characteristics and ability to cope independently in different environments, with different levels of mainstream or special school assistance. Parents inevitably had to compromise.

Having made the choice at a particular point in a school career does not necessarily negate the need to review the placement at different stages in the education process. Dealing with the education of a child with MLD becomes more complex as they age. It was reported that children become more self-aware towards the end of their primary schooling and appear more emotionally vulnerable, which can affect their self-esteem. In addition, the schools with which parents must liaise get larger and more complex at secondary level and the importance and complexity of home-school communication and

relationships increases. In order to support both pupils and parents effectively, it was evident that schools required a reliable communication strategy that not only focused on communication between staff and parents, but also ensured effective communication between staff.

Friendship was important to pupils, however, whilst mainstream provision was considered to support social development, one parent noted that this may be in terms of making pupils acceptable members of society, as opposed to supporting them to make friends. Her daughter's attempts to make friends resulted in teasing.

Children with SEN should have their provision reviewed on a regular basis whether or not they have a statement. Although parents referred to being invited to meetings, the evidence suggested that some parents were not involved in the review process on an on-going basis. This caused one parent to feel that she was not involved in her child's education.

9.5 Conclusion

With regards to the policy cycle, this chapter has demonstrated that whilst Government policy supports inclusion, mainstream provision is not the choice of all parents: some parents want the special provision that they have a right to choose. In practice, the process of choosing is full of obstacles and dilemmas that are compounded by apparent funding issues at the LA level.

This provides further evidence of the complexities of the policy cycle (Bowe *et al*, 1992) and in particular the transfer from policy text in to practice.

The following chapter looks at data gathered during observations of children with MLD in settings.

CHAPTER 10

PUPIL INTERVIEWS

10.0 Introduction

Previous chapters have set the context within which the education of pupils with MLD occurs: the policies that define action at school level and current practice in schools in relation to meeting individual needs through for example, differentiation and varied teaching strategies. Through this process pupils have demonstrated the tensions and dilemmas faced in implementing inclusion in practice. In this chapter, pupils describe their experience of this education system: explaining what it is like to be a child with MLD, in mainstream and special classrooms.

10.1 Aims

Data from the pupil interviews addressed the following research questions:

3. What are the experiences of teachers and pupils with MLD in special and inclusive settings?
5. What are the views of MLD pupils of inclusion policy as experienced by them?

In addition to addressing these questions, the continuous policy cycle (Bowe *et al*, 1992) will be examined further from the perspective of the context of

practice, in particular observing how government policy directly impacts upon pupils.

10.2 Methods

10.2.1 Pupils

Table 10.1 gives details of the five pupils, their setting, KS and age. Two had experience of both special and mainstream settings and the youngest was moving to special provision.

Four of the pupils agreed to participate in formal interviews; one preferred to respond informally to questions during the observation period. Whilst field notes were recorded in the observation data, comments made by the pupil have been reported in this chapter. Four pupils were female because the mainstream secondary was a girls' school and the first parents to provide consent to the special school had daughters.

The number of pupils was smaller than anticipated. Four of the nine children observed were not interviewed, due to concerns about their ability to understand the situation, or because they may have found the interaction stressful.

Table 10.1: pupil details

Male/Female	Setting	Key Stage	Age/Year
Female	Special	KS4	Age 15, Y11
Female	Mainstream secondary	KS3	Age 13, Y9
Female	Special	KS3	Age 13/14, Y9
Male	Mainstream primary	KS2	Age 9, Y4/5
Female	Mainstream secondary (informal chat)	KS4	Age 15, Y11

10.2.2 Material

The interview schedule (Appendix E) was based on questions used in the scoping study (Aubrey *et al*, 2005). Open questions covered academic and social aspects of pupils' school lives, for example: whether they enjoyed school; what made a good teacher and a good lesson; how they felt about withdrawal sessions and the support they received in the classroom.

10.2.3 Procedure

The interview process and ethical issues involved in interviewing children have been discussed in full in Chapter 3: 3.3.3.

Observations were conducted prior to undertaking interviews, to enable the researcher to become familiar to pupils and so that observation data could inform the interview process. Pupils were asked whether they would be happy

to be interviewed about their life at school; in one case the pupil asked to be accompanied by the SENCO and appeared to speak freely in her presence. Children were provided with an explanation of the research prior to commencing interviews. The voice recorder was used in each interview with pupils' permission, although on one occasion it was evident that the machine was a source of concern for the pupil and so it was turned off. This interview was brought to a close after a short time, when the pupil showed concern about moving to her next lesson.

10.2.4 Analysis

The data were analysed initially using an a priori approach: looking specifically for evidence to address the research questions. Data were extracted from each transcript and recorded under appropriate question headings (Appendix O). The data within each heading were further divided into relevant sub-groups that emerged. The process provided a means of identifying common themes amongst pupils and across settings. Themes that emerged from the data were those of lessons being fun and experiences of bullying.

10.3 Results

10.3.1 Pupils

The age, stage and individual characteristics of the pupils, impacted significantly on the data gathered; the mainstream KS3, and special school

KS4 pupils were articulate and confident, and spoke at length. The special school KS3 pupil, although articulate, was less comfortable in the interview situation, hence produced less data. The KS2 pupil was confident, but found it more difficult to articulate his thoughts. The mainstream KS4 pupil provided data at intervals during the observation period.

Due to this variation in the length and elaboration of interviews, some pupils' thoughts are referred to more frequently, and in greater detail, than others. However, the views of all pupils have been taken into account in the analysis.

10.3.2 Current placements

Pupils were asked whether they liked being at school. They each replied positively. The mainstream KS3 pupil was the most enthusiastic, reporting that this was her fourth school and she loved it; she was unable to think of anything that it could do better. She reported that she was a hard worker, although she did not like homework: "It's cool being here. I've enjoyed my time….".

The KS2 pupil said that he liked school. It was apparent that his view was based upon his experience of friendship: "…I like school because I like, cos my friends are actually looking after me when I've been hurting myself...".

The special school KS4 pupil was more reserved in her response: "It's okay; it's not too bad." She clarified this by adding: "...the learning's okay I think but

in some of the lessons it's not as okay because they don't make the lesson as interesting and fun to learn."

10.3.3 Transition

Two pupils were facing transition periods in their education; each expressed apprehension. The mainstream KS2 pupil was moving to a split placement arrangement in year 6, and described feeling a bit scared, because he would not see his best friend for part of each week: "…I'm not happy I'm leaving."

The special school KS4 pupil, had four months remaining before moving to further education. She explained that she was worried about what it would be like to leave school, go to college and meet new people. She described feeling scared about having a boyfriend, relationships and being at college: "…it's a bit terrifying, depending on where it's going to lead on from, like from the point I leave school onwards."

10.3.4 Teacher-pupil relationships

Trust was an important element in the teacher-pupil relationship, for two pupils. The special school KS4 pupil, commented that if she felt she could trust someone, then she would talk to them. The mainstream KS3 pupil spoke of having two teachers in particular that she would turn to for support: "…she saves my life almost…not all the time but when I need her she's there.".

Pupils explained the need for teachers to provide explanations that pupils could understand. In order to be able to act independently, the KS3 special school pupil needed teachers who provided visual explanations, and followed the process through. She said her maths teacher: "…explains it properly.".

The mainstream KS3 pupil reported that she learned best from people speaking to her, and said of one teacher: "When she talks I can understand it…".

The special school KS4 pupil explained that she and her peers found talking helpful in their learning process. She wanted teachers to understand this, and to join in with discussions. Of one teacher she said: "She would join in with us and it feels like she's a part of the group. It's like she understands what we are like…".

Receiving timely support was an important factor identified by the special school KS3 pupil. She had special and mainstream experience, and observed that in mainstream classes she had always waited a long time for help, because the teacher worked their way around the room; in special school help was available straight away.

10.3.5 Difficult teacher-pupil relationships

The special school KS3 pupil could not think of any difficult teacher relationships. The question was not asked of the mainstream KS3 pupil, due

to the presence of the SENCO: it may have placed the pupil in a difficult position. The mainstream KS2 pupil when asked about teachers, found it easier to respond in terms of lessons that he did or did not like.

The special school KS4 pupil, however, did explain the difficulties of relationships with some teachers. She reported that lessons were not enjoyable if teachers: "…don't know how to have fun.". This pupil valued teachers taking time to talk and explain, either as a group, or moving around the class taking time with individuals. She explained that she had known one of her teachers for a long time, and had never been able to talk to him about anything, reporting that he was "miserable" and had no time for them:

> …he won't come round and talk to us and explain things in an interesting way that we can understand, that we can well you know talk about those things and then write down to get a bit of a rough idea.

10.3.6 Withdrawal sessions

Withdrawal sessions were a key aspect of education provision for children with MLD, in mainstream settings.

The KS2 pupil had numeracy and literacy sessions with the SENCO, and commented that he liked coming out of the classroom: "It just makes me fun...I don't know I just like it.". He added: "I like being in the smaller groups so that we don't get crowded."

The mainstream KS3 pupil also confirmed that she liked coming out of lessons: "…(laughs) I enjoy it cos some lessons I don't like and I just come here." She listed a range of activities undertaken away from the class: improving memory; vocabulary; games; reading stories and computing. These activities were described as "fun". However, whilst she appreciated the value of this learning, she reported that:

> Some people in my class say 'you do baby stuff' and I say to them 'no that's the only way that your brain will build up your concentration…, you can learn from all this stuff.

Asked how this reaction from her peers made her feel, she replied:

> I feel quite offended cos this thing is working great for me and for everyone else….

10.3.7 Lessons that facilitate success

10.3.7.1 Characteristics of a good lesson

Pupils were asked what made a lesson good for them, and in three of the four cases, it emerged that the lesson had to be "fun". When asked what made a lesson fun, the special school KS4 pupil explained:

> …it's the way they explain it…. You can have a conversation with them and talk to them about…you can sit there, have a laugh and everything whilst we're doing our work and that's what makes it fun...

The characteristics of a fun lesson, bore similarities to the qualities that the pupils looked for in a good teacher.

The theme of ‘fun’ emerged throughout discussions about good lessons. Those lessons that were popular with all pupils were maths, and creative lessons; for two pupils, science was enjoyable.

10.3.7.2 Maths

Maths was reported to be a popular subject by all pupils in mainstream and special settings. Lessons were described as “fun” by the special school KS4 pupil, whose teacher was described as being part of the group; she understood them.

The special school KS3 pupil also enjoyed maths. Good explanations and follow through from her teacher, made this pupil feel: “…I’m good at maths. I know how to do it. I need a little bit of help but then I can do it.”

The mainstream KS3 pupil was equally confident: “…in maths I learn quite well...”

The KS2 pupil was very enthusiastic about maths, returning to talk about it at intervals throughout the discussion. He enjoyed sessions, including telling the time, with the SENCO who: “…gives us lots of nice maths like take-away and equals and everything.”. He added that maths: “…keeps my brain going.”.

10.3.7.3 Creativity

Creative lessons were popular with all pupils. The KS2 pupil enjoyed painting, drawing, messy art and cross stitch sessions, whilst the special school KS3 pupil, demonstrated her confidence with the subject, saying: "…I'm good at art. I like to draw and make things, things like that.".

The term "fun" was used by the mainstream KS3 pupil, to describe dance lessons. She admired her teacher who could: "…make up a dance routine in her head…. And she can get us doing group work.". The descriptions provided by the pupil, suggested that the teacher had developed a good rapport with this pupil, and provided explanations to meet her needs. It also indicated that this pupil valued group work.

The special school KS4 pupil, associated the characteristic of fun in a teacher, with interest in the subject: "…he's a really fun person and we were kind of surprised, the lesson's actually more *interesting* now."

10.3.7.4 Science

Science was enjoyed particularly by the KS2 pupil; the mainstream KS4 pupil found it an interesting lesson, having not always liked it. However, it was not mentioned by the mainstream or special school KS3 pupils, and the special school KS4 pupil did not enjoy it, because she found it difficult to talk to the teacher. This reflected her need for a good relationship with teachers, irrespective of the subject.

In response to a question about enjoying numbers, the mainstream KS2 pupil reported: "Yeh, that's all I enjoy. And I have science and art to enjoy as well and cross stitch." He was asked what he liked about science and explained that: "…we get to hold elec…you get to put plugs on and make electricity.".

10.3.8 Targets

Information relating to targets emerged from the data. When targets were mentioned during discussion, the mainstream KS2 pupil was unsure what this term meant. He responded that they had targets in year 4, but not in years 5 and 6. When asked whether he had anything he was working towards at that time, he replied: "No, but I am going to have to like improve in my literacy.". He explained that to get better in literacy, he had to write stories.

The mainstream KS3 pupil was asked how she knew how well she was getting on at school, and reported that the SENCO sent postcards home, and she was told at parents' evenings. She said that her levels were "absolutely terrific": "…I got loads of high levels I just can't remember them cos they were really good.".

10.3.9 Aspects of school with which children struggle

In response to a direct question about things in the classroom that made learning harder for pupils, the mainstream KS2 pupil responded that working with the whiteboard was hard, but struggled to explain why. The mainstream

KS3 pupil, said that she would ask if she did not understand something. In addition to these direct responses, evidence of further difficulties experienced by the pupils emerged from the data, and is discussed below.

10.3.9.1 Memory

The mainstream KS3 pupil described difficulties with her memory; remembering things that she had learned, and to bring things to school. With help from her parents, she had discovered that it helped her memory if she walked and recited information:

> …what it does is stimulate the brain so if you can't remember something you would do the walk say it in your head and say it out loud and then when you do the walk it keeps it stuck in there so you can remember.

10.3.9.2 Literacy

Literacy was an area in which two pupils recognised their difficulties. The mainstream KS3 pupil struggled with writing; she explained: "…at the moment I'm trying to find a way for me to write things down cos that's my weakest thing to do.".

The KS2 pupil, similarly did not enjoy literacy. He reported that they just wrote stories and made up plays. He said that it: "…doesn't give me any brain power."; "I don't get it.". Whilst sitting in the library area, he commented that he liked to take maths books home rather than story books, which he did not like.

10.3.9.3 Class discussion

The mainstream KS4 pupil reported that PSHE tended to involve discussion, and whilst she did not always know what to say, she tried to understand. She explained that she did not like speaking in class; she described the classroom as a stage, with the teacher as an actor and the pupils, the audience. If she raised her hand, she became part of the stage, and she did not like that.

In contrast, the mainstream KS3 pupil had no concerns about speaking in class, and asking for support. She explained: "I can try it out. I won't say 'oh no I can't do this'. I'll just try it out first and if I can't do it I'll just ask for help. It's that simple.".

10.3.9.4 Environmental issues

The special school KS4 pupil struggled with hearing difficulties, and did not always understand what was said in class. This upset her, because it reminded her that she had difficulties. She reported that teachers turned away whilst talking, leaving her exhausted from trying to hear and understand. She did not want to ask teachers what she should do, because they might think that she had not been paying attention; she felt left out, and pretended that she had heard, when she had not. She commented that it would have been easier if she had someone with her, who could tell her what the teacher had said:

> that way I'd be able to look at them straight off and I'd be able to understand them and I'd be able to do my own work and that would actually make it a lot more easier for me…maybe if they did turn round I'd be perfectly fine.

She wondered whether teachers had forgotten her difficulty.

The KS2 pupil found that friends sometimes made it harder in class by talking; when asked if he talked he replied “sometimes”.

10.3.9.5 Organisation

Information about organisational issues emerged from the data.

The mainstream KS3 pupil, explained that she was sometimes late to classes; she did not know why, she just was (other data indicated that this was due to bus travel). She reported, however, that she did not need to worry, she had her timetable and room numbers, and could go wherever she needed to go. She demonstrated her understanding of her timetable, whilst explaining about dance lessons: “You do it week 2 Monday.”.

The mainstream KS2 pupil also demonstrated his understanding of the timetable, whilst talking about art lessons. Asked whether these were on a Wednesday, he replied: “Yes. That’s tomorrow.”.

10.3.10 Extra-curricular activities

Extra-curricular activities were not a focus for questions, however, the mainstream KS3 pupil offered the opinion that, although she did not like lunch and after school clubs, they were useful for people who did like them. She

reported that she went to them sometimes, and observed that: "…it's really good cos you need to learn extra stuff…".

10.3.11 Friendship

The mainstream KS2 and KS3 pupils were confident in their friendships, reporting that they had lots of friends; the KS3 pupil enjoyed hanging around with her friends, talking; the KS2 pupil reported that his favourite times of day were playtimes and maths. He recounted a story from when he was five years old and his friends had helped him when he hurt himself on the climbing frame. He explained that his first friend in nursery was still his friend, and that he had been picked on by a child when he was four years old, who later became, and remained, his friend: "We was friends all the way through from nursery to year 5. I think we're still going to be friends in Year 6.". This pupil reported that he would miss his friend when he moved to split provision.

The mainstream KS4 pupil did not speak of friendships, rather she described how peers could make a difference to her day; they did not always include her, which was upsetting: "I know I shouldn't make it a bad day, but I do.".

The special school pupils spoke of being outnumbered by boys in their classes; the KS3 pupil commented that there were just two girls in the class, and that the other girl mixed mostly with boys; this pupil met up with other girls at break, at which time the boys often annoyed them. Break time was, however, her favourite time: "…as there's no work to do then (laughs).".

The KS4 pupil was the only girl in the class, and in her description, she distinguished between friends and peers:

> …to be honest with you I can't really exactly call them friends, I just…I'll just get on with them… when it comes to a point where they're being rude and saying rude things then I just…I just go quiet and I just sit there and do what I have to do….

10.3.12 Bullying

Two pupils, one special and one mainstream, reported that they had previously experienced bullying. This was an emergent theme as opposed to a priori.

The mainstream KS3 pupil reported that:

> Every single school I've been to they're just liars – they see bullying they don't do nothing about it. This school just does it like that (snaps fingers) you know.

The KS4 special school pupil, reported having experienced bullying at primary age, however, she had been supported in class by a TA. As the pupils who bullied her moved away, there were four or five people with whom she started to get along.

10.4 Discussion

Pupils' happiness in their current placements was based on such aspects as enjoyment, friendship and learning. Concerns regarding transition were a feature, but from a social as opposed to an academic perspective.

Good relationships with teachers were described in terms of trust, being understood, being able to talk, sound explanations, and individual support. These same descriptors were used to describe a good lesson. Pupils were clear about teachers that they would turn to for support and those that they would not.

The emergent theme of lessons being “fun”, was of significance. The evidence suggested that lessons that were “fun” for pupils, were those in which they understood what they needed to do; whether pupils enjoyed lessons, depended upon the qualities of the teacher and standard of teaching, rather than the topic. The evidence indicated that pupils demonstrated greater confidence in their abilities, in the lessons that they enjoyed.

Mainstream pupils were positive about withdrawal sessions considering them fun despite, in the case of the secondary KS3 pupil, negative comments from peers. There was evidence that in the latter’s case withdrawal sessions could be a means of avoiding some lessons. The use of the term “fun” in respect of withdrawal sessions, implies that the pupils received the explanations and support that they needed. These sessions were run by SENCOs, supporting the idea that it is the quality of teaching that is of key importance for pupils with MLD.

The evidence suggests that, as a group, the pupils knew their strengths and limitations. In some instances, they had identified the solutions to their difficulties, and either lacked the confidence to act, or acted independently from

the school. Characteristics of teachers have importance; pupils, confident in their relationship with the teacher, may have been more willing to seek support. Teachers, confident in their own abilities and knowledge, may have offered solutions to support pupils, rather than them seeking support elsewhere.

Friendship was important to all pupils, however, not all experiences were positive. Descriptions of friends suggested that they were considered by mainstream pupils to be peers who looked after each other, played together, included each other, and shared conversations. The special school KS4 pupil was clear about what constituted a friend, distinguishing them from people she simply 'got on with'. The girls got along with the boys in their classes, and sought the company of girls at break times.

The evidence from these pupils suggested that friendship at secondary age for pupils with MLD, was more complicated than at primary age, when children played together. At secondary age, relationships seemed to take account of difference or gender, and pupils in mainstream and special provision faced challenges in finding friends. In mainstream there was a risk of social exclusion within the classroom, or teasing from peers about difference. In special school, pupils were not excluded in a social sense within the classroom, but the greater number of boys, impacted on the girls' ability to find friends in the classroom.

10.5 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an understanding of pupils' experiences of MLD on a daily basis. It was evident that the quality of teaching and the characteristics of teachers were of key importance academically, whether in mainstream or special provision, in classrooms or withdrawal sessions. Skilled teachers who made pupils feel valued, enabled them to experience success, and feel confident in their abilities. In such an environment, pupils may feel better able to tackle their difficulties and implement their solutions, in the knowledge that they have support. Without such an environment, there is the danger that pupils with MLD will remain silent, unable to achieve their potential.

From a social perspective, this evidence does not suggest an advantage in either mainstream or special provision; each presented its challenges to developing friendships, as the pupils matured.

There has been a move towards mainstream education for pupils with MLD. In practice, the evidence from pupils suggested that it was not the location that was important, rather the quality of teaching that the pupils experienced. This lack of evidence firmly in favour of either mainstream or special provision is reflected in the Government's policy, which moves towards mainstream provision, whilst keeping special schools open.

In terms of the continuous policy cycle (Bowe *et al*, 1992), practice either reflects the confusion evident in policy, or causes the confusion, due to the lack of firm evidence upon which to base policy.

CHAPTER 11

PUPIL OBSERVATIONS

11.0 Introduction

The previous chapter examined data gathered from pupil interviews. It was evident that fun, friendship and achievement were important for pupils with MLD in school. In addition, good relationships with teachers, enjoyment of lessons, discussion and sound explanations supported their learning in class.

This chapter identifies observed practice in different settings and pupils' educational and social experiences in the different contexts.

11.1 Aims

An aim of observing pupils in their settings was to capture their lived experience of IE, the social and academic benefits and challenges, to observe the impact (if any) of their presence on their peers and to witness the benefits and challenges for staff individually and the school as an organisation.

Observations also provided an opportunity to triangulate data collected by survey and interview.

The observation data addressed the following research questions:

2. How do schools (head teachers and teachers) implement the policy regarding the inclusion of pupils with MLD?
3. What are the experiences of teachers and pupils with MLD in special and inclusive settings?

In addition to addressing these questions, the continuous policy cycle (Bowe *et al*, 1992) will be examined further from the perspective of the context of practice. In particular, the data will provide evidence regarding whether and how, inclusive policy as articulated by government is implemented in practice.

11.2 Method

11.2.1 Participants

A total of nine pupils, four female and five male, ranging in age from four to fifteen years were observed across four settings; five pupils in mainstream settings and four in special provision. The ages of the children in each KS were the same. Details of participants are provided in table 11.1.

Table 11.1: Pupil information

Male/Female	KS	Mainstream/Special
Female	KS4, age 15	Mainstream
Female	KS3, age 13	Mainstream
Male	KS2, age 9	Mainstream
Male	KS1, age 6	Mainstream
Female	KS4, age 15	Special
Female	KS3, age 13	Special
Male	KS2, age 9	Special
Male	KS1, age 6	Special
Male	EYFS, age 4	Mainstream

11.2.2 Material

Field notes were used to record the observed data against a timeline and within a framework that took account of:

- subject;
- lesson length and structure;
- how the class was organised in terms of group, paired or individual working;
- teaching strategies and teacher activity;
- whether target pupil received additional support and if so, from whom, for what period and in what way;
- the nature of activities and pupils' responses;
- interactions between the pupils, their peers and staff,

- and general aspects of the learning environment, such as space, table layout, movement of children within the room, displays and noise.

Notes also indicated whether pupils were on or off-task. If both their talk and actions were unrelated to the task in hand, they were judged to be off-task. Listening to talk about the task; talk related to the task with peers or staff; working independently on the task, or physically completing the task whilst talking about unrelated topics, were considered to indicate that the pupil was on-task.

11.2.3 Procedure

The procedure and recording tools are discussed in detail in Chapter 3: 3.3.4.

The non-participant observations took place with the consent of parents (Appendix H). The decision as to whether to inform pupils of the observation was given careful consideration, as per the discussion in section 3.2.4. It was decided that for two pupils (Foundation Stage and KS1) the researcher would be introduced generally to the class. Secondary pupils were introduced to the researcher, aware of the purpose of the observations, and asked for their assent; all except one of the secondary pupils were interviewed.

The observations required the researcher to familiarise herself with the timetable and physical environment, in terms of the layout of the school and of

individual classrooms. It was also necessary to be aware of different adults in settings and their roles, to understand pupils' interactions with them.

Individual observations took place over one to two days thus enabling the researcher to observe as wide a range of lessons as possible, for example, core and non-core subjects, creative activities and physical education. Primary pupils were additionally observed during unstructured periods, providing an opportunity to witness their activity and behaviour in a social situation. The Early Years setting provided opportunities to observe social interaction within their free-flow arrangement. Secondary pupils were observed during structured situations only. The researcher considered that they were sensitive to her continual presence and needed time unobserved. A view supported by the mainstream KS3 pupil who observed that at break times she would be with her friends.

11.2.4 Analysis

The field notes provided substantial quantities of data. In order to focus the analysis and to provide a view of common elements of the educational experience within different contexts, the data were analysed and recorded under the headings: contextual note, objectives; length; adult-to-pupil ratios; resources used; structure, grouping, content; interactions.

Organising the data in the manner described facilitated an a priori approach; data were thus identified initially to address the research questions. At a

second level of analysis the following emergent themes were identified: a reliance on supervision and engagement to maintain focus; the impact of behaviour on learning; the preference for KS3/4 pupils to distance themselves physically from their peers in classrooms; the enjoyment of computer activities; the ability to maintain focus in some situations despite distractions, and the desire to avoid failure.

For the purposes of reporting the data, it was decided to focus on one lesson consisting of a core subject, either English/literacy or maths/numeracy, for each pupil in KS1 to KS4 where possible. However, permission for an individual observation in the special school KS3 class was received only after the core subjects had been completed. The lesson analysis is therefore of the group, as opposed to an individual. The special school KS4 pupil did not have usual maths and English lessons during the observation; the analysis therefore focused on a music lesson that was considered to provide a common lesson format.

11.3 Results

11.3.1 Participants

For each pupil observed, table 11.2 provides information regarding observation length and number of lessons observed, average length of a lesson (KS3/4) or session (Foundation/KS1/2); a typical lesson structure; adult-to-child ratios, and the organisation of pupils in terms of grouping.

The response of pupils to the observations varied. Nursery, special school primary and mainstream KS1 pupils appeared unaffected by the presence of unfamiliar adults. The mainstream KS2 pupil was interviewed and therefore aware of the observation. His behaviour appeared to become more exuberant towards the end of the day. Three secondary aged girls were reserved, however they did not appear uncomfortable with the situation, whilst the fourth, the mainstream KS3 pupil, was confident and asked by the SENCO to accompany the researcher.

Table 11.2: Pupils observed

Pupil KS	No. of lessons observed	Subjects	Length of lessons/ sessions	Typical class structure	Adult: Child ratio	Organisation of children
Found-ation	Five sessions	Variety of activities	Length dependent upon attendance	Free-flow arrangement; children chose. Whole group story/singing sessions.	Foundation stage: 4:26	Individual & small group activity. Whole group sessions
M/S KS1	Four (1 day)	Literacy, numeracy, ICT, science, assembly prep.	9.10–11.20am. 11.40–12.40pm. 1.50–3.30pm.	Introductory session. Task according to ability. Re-group and review.	Varies from 1 to 4 adults: 30 children	Whole class introduction/ summary. Individual task. One, 1:1 task with TA.
Sp KS1	Eight (2 days)	Literacy, numeracy, art, swimming, game/story	9.00-10.50am 11.20-12.20 1.35-3.30pm	Whole class activity/task with 1:1 element, interspersed with choosing activities.	2:4	Whole primary school. Whole class (4). Individual work. Some pairs/threes.
M/S KS2	Four (1 day)	Numeracy, literacy, PE, craft	9.10–11.20am. 11.40–12.40pm. 1.50–3.30pm.	With SENCO: introduction, task, review.	Varies from 1 to 2 adults: 30 children	Lit/maths group of four with SENCO. Whole class PE/craft
Sp KS2	Four (1 day)	'Fitness', literacy, 'choice', Romans, art	9.00-10.50am 11.20-12.20 1.35-3.30pm	Introductory session, task, interspersed with choosing activities.	2:7	Whole primary school. Whole class (7). Individual work. Some pairs.
M/S KS3	Nine (1½ days)	PE, art, science, PHSE, history, maths, French, English (2)	50 minutes	Introductory session. Task. Pack away.	Non-core 1:22. Core & art 10-15 with 2/3 adults.	Whole group intro. Individual tasks. Maths: individual support in small group setting.
Sp KS3	Seven (1½ days)	Science, maths, food technology (3), English, humanities	1 hour	Introductory session. Task. Pack away.	2:8	Whole group intro. Tasks mixed: whole group/ individual.
M/S KS4	Nine (1½ days)	History (2), Spanish (2), maths (2), English, science, PSHE	50 minutes	Introductory session. Task. Pack away.	Non-core 1:22. Maths 12, Eng 20 with 2 adults.	Whole group initially. Tasks varied small group, paired, individual.
Sp KS4	Four (1 day)	Music, maths, ASDAN, English	1 hour	Introductory session. Task. Pack away.	2:6	Whole group intro. Tasks: whole group, paired, individual.

11.3.2 Context

11.3.2.1 Nursery

The nursery provided children with free movement inside and out, around a range of activities that addressed their learning needs. Staff worked throughout the nursery, so children had contact with all staff, who knew their learning goals and supported their achievement of these.

11.3.2.2 Mainstream Primary

The mainstream primary school was a Victorian building set over three floors, with a central, open-plan space on each floor, lined on two sides by large, bright classrooms. Classes were supported by a teacher and a full or part-time TA. When withdrawn from classrooms, pupils worked in the open-plan central resource space.

11.3.2.3 Special School

The single special school building housed primary pupils on the ground floor and secondary on the first. The close proximity of classrooms ensured that pupils did not have far to move between lessons. Pupils shared a large hall and outside space.

Primary classes were supported by a teacher and full-time TA, and frequently moved between classrooms for whole primary school activities. Secondary pupils moved between classrooms and teachers for different subjects, however their TA always accompanied them.

11.3.2.4 Mainstream Secondary

This large school was located across separate, multi-level buildings, causing sometimes lengthy walks between lessons. Classes were taught by one teacher and for core subjects, pupils were supported by a TA. The school had a department dedicated to SEN, managed by the SENCO.

The lesson analysis for each pupil observed is provided in the following tables. Abbreviations used in the tables are: T: teacher; TC: target child; P: peer.

11.3.3 Foundation Stage analysis

Table 11.3 details an indoor session that occurred one morning.

Table 11.3: Foundation Stage Target Child

Criteria	Foundation Stage	
Contextual note; objective(s)	TC arrived at the nursery upset. Settled in by teacher. *Objectives*: • Form good relationships with adults and peers. • Select and use activities and resources independently. • Extend vocabulary, exploring meanings and sounds of new words.	
Length	Thirty nine minutes.	
Adult:pupil ratio	Whole nursery: 4:26 During observation ratio varied 1:1, 1:2, 1:4.	
Resources	Books; ICT; transport & mat, animals, dolls house.	
Structure (segments), grouping, content	*Segment One 13 minutes*	Sharing books, 1:1, teacher-led. Computer, 1:2/1:3, teacher-supported, peer-led.
	Segment Two 9 minutes	Road map and transport toys, 1:1 teacher-led.
	Segment Three 10 minutes	Dolls' house and wild animals, independent play.
	Segment Four 7 minutes	Dolls' house and animals, 1:2 parallel play; 1:4 some cooperative play. Teacher-supported.
Interactions T:TC TC:T TC:P P:TC TA:TC TC:TA	*Segment One*	T:TC. Books. Closed questions; commentary on pictures; makes relevant to TC. TC:T. Responds to comments and questions. T:TC. Computer. Reminds TC about turn-taking; questions; extends topic; explains body parts; expands TC's dialogue; commentary; closes session. TC:T. observes; initiates interaction twice; responds. TC:P. Attempts to take control of 'mouse'.
	Segment Two	T:TC. Commentary; leads imaginative play; introduces TC's favourite character to activity; provides vocabulary; relates sounds to toys. TC:T. Engages with toys; responds; copies sounds.
	Segment Three	T:TC. Withdraws to encourage independent activity; reassures; observes. TC:T. Watches T and computer area; engages with toys; investigates; selects; self-directed imaginative play; uses sounds.
	Segment Four	T:TC (and peers). Questions; engages in imaginative play; comments; suggests; repeats TC's words and extends; responds to TC; expands vocabulary; explains; questions (when TC calls her by wrong name); extends play. TC:T. Responds; repeats vocabulary; initiates dialogue; selects toys; makes sounds; self-corrects. TC:P. parallel play making sounds (1:2); co-operative play faces P, both roar (1:4).

The TC was supported entirely by the nursery teacher during the settling-in period analysed and interacted with her frequently throughout the observation period. When not with the teacher, the TC was supervised and supported by the TAs. They encouraged, praised and sometimes directed his activity, supporting the development of his vocabulary and communication skills. They supported independent activity, and found opportunities to develop imaginative play.

The TC was confident in initiating interaction with staff, even occasionally continuing to do something after having been told not to, with a little look to the TA. His relationships with peers of different ages were positive; he frequently initiated play. On one occasion a younger child sought him out for play. TAs took opportunities to support children's social development, encouraging them to be thoughtful, to communicate and when appropriate, allowing them to resolve social issues independently, such as matters of toy 'ownership' and turn-taking.

Activities available appeared appropriate for the TC's needs and engaging; he could persist for lengthy periods (fifteen minutes and seventeen minutes observed) on individual activities.

An emergent theme was the TC's enjoyment of computer activities and his ability to make his turn on the computer last as long as possible. On one occasion, he was observed to answer staff questions falsely twice, in order to maintain control of the keyboard.

11.3.4 KS 1

Tables 11.4 and 11.5 provide analyses of the experiences of mainstream and special school KS1 pupils during literacy sessions.

Table 11.4. Mainstream KS1 Target Child

Criteria	Mainstream KS1	
Contextual note; objective(s)	Pupils arrive and complete start of day activities. Literacy: 1:1 with TA; whole class intro; group work. *Objectives:* • (TC)Hear and say sounds in words in the order in which they occur. • (Group) Compose and write simple sentences independently to communicate meaning	
Length	Seventy nine minutes	
Adult:pupil ratio	Class: 30 pupils, class and trainee teachers, TA, volunteer. TC spent time with TA in 1:1, 1:2 and 1:7 situations.	
Resources	Picture/word cards; individual whiteboard; exercise book.	
Structure (segments), grouping, content	*Segment One 23 minutes*	1:1 (11 minutes) TA-led, practiced saying, reading, writing phonemes, simple words, using cards, whiteboard. 1:2, 12 minutes.
	Segment Two 36 minutes	1:30 T-led introduction to topic and task. TC absent from room throughout. Returns to TA. 1:7 TA-led task; grouped by ability. Copied beginning of sentence "I decided to make…" and completed independently. Drew picture.
	Segment Three 20 minutes	1:30 trainee teacher-led plenary. Selected pupils read work.
Interactions T:TC TC:T TC:P P:TC TA:TC TC:TA	*Segment One*	TA:TC. Provides vocabulary; pronounces phonemes; re-focuses TC 7 times; differentiates task; praises; positive feedback; closed questions; extends responses; choral spelling; provides answers; instructs. TC:TA. Repeats sounds; excited when answers; distracted; responds; questions; observes peers.
	Segment Two	T:TC. Instructs page to use; explains task to group. TA:TC. Permits exit; explains; instructs and repeats; reassures; demonstrates; closed questions; prompts; questions to support understanding; re-focuses; praises. TC:TA. Requests; whines when struggles; responds some of time. TC:P. taps, pulls arm, when no response grabs pencil; initiates discussion about pencils, teeth; looks at P's work; when P challenges TC's spelling, points to neighbour's work (copied?); listens. P:TC. Pats head; explains; comments; responds.
	Segment Three	Trainee T:class. Gives rapid instructions; reprimands TC. TC behaviour. constantly gravitates to P on carpet; distracted; appears to listen but does not join in clapping; fidgets; slaps P's bottom; smiles; watches others; claps second time; leaves room twice. P:TC. Puts arm around TC; smiles; whispers.

The lesson format described above was typical of lessons throughout the observation. The TC's response to activities suggested that the fit of task to ability became less appropriate as the group size increased. In the one-to-one situation, he appeared enthusiastic and was easily focused; in group situations he complained when he believed that he had made a mistake, appeared to copy from peers and was demanding of the TAs attention. In whole class situations he was off-task for the majority of time.

Interaction with teachers throughout the day was infrequent and limited to instructions and praise when sought. During the first session of the morning, the TC was provided with a substantial amount of support by the TA which, during a later numeracy lesson, was observed to be to the detriment of attention to others. This level of support limited the amount of work that the TC completed independently. In the absence of the TA, the TC received no additional adult support, although on one occasion a peer offered support. In the absence of close supervision, the TC was given sentences to copy independently.

The TC gravitated towards two peers in particular in class, on one occasion asking one of them to stop another pupil imitating him. He sat with them at the table and sought them out on the carpet; receiving positive responses. However, when off-task, the behaviour of the group became inappropriate. Interaction with other pupils was limited.

Two themes emerged; firstly the TC's reliance on the TA to direct his activity and to support him with tasks when she was present; secondly, his frequent absence from the classroom; five absences for a total of twelve minutes during the day. Four of those absences occurred during whole class sessions, whilst the teacher explained the next action. The fifth occurred when the child was off-task and not being closely supervised during small group work.

Table 11.5. Special School KS1 Target Child

Criteria	Special School KS1	
Context-ual note; objective (s)	Literacy session. Pupils had previously completed an whole primary activity session and start of day activities. *Objectives:* • Read some high frequency words. • Read texts compatible with their phonic knowledge and skills • Read and write one grapheme for each of the 44 phonemes.	
Length	Fifty five minutes.	
Adult:pupil ratio	2:4. Teacher led structured learning activities; TA supported pupils who were not with teacher.	
Res-ources	Books; paper; word bingo; doll; pram; music; dolls' house; furniture; transport toys.	
Structure/ segments, grouping, content	*Segment One 11 minutes*	1:3 teacher-led, reading, discussing story, looking for simple words, letters. TC maintains focus. Peers' attendance variable.
	Segment Two 14 minutes	1:3 teacher-led word bingo. Brief semi-structured play: pupil-led, adult supported. 1:1 teacher/TA-led writing letters, discussion.
	Segment Three 30 minutes	Semi-structured play with dolls' house, furniture, transport toys; pupil-led, teacher-supported developing social skills.
Inter-actions T:TC TC:T TC:P P:TC TA:TC TC:TA	*Seg-ment One*	T:TC and peers: reads; open and closed questions; explains; praises; commentary; responds to TC; reassures; slows TC down, paces work for majority; instructs. TC:T. Excited (shouts, stamps); responds (points, reads aloud, makes phonetic sounds); discusses appropriately; initiates; briefly distracted by peer; suggests action; follows instruction.
	Segment Two	T:TC. Directs; accommodates imaginative play; closed questions; praise; recognises limits of attention; facilitates constructive play; suggests and supports action (writing letters); discusses; explains; observes; comments; corrects; demonstrates. TC:T. Responds (identifies words, reads aloud); initiates; responds to instruction; selects semi-structured activity; responds to suggestion to write letters; shows work; questions; observes. TC:TA. Initiates; hugs; taps arm and talks (to get attention); shows work; enthusiastic responses. TA:TC. Praises, suggests, responds. TC:P. Listens; observes.
	Segment Three	T:TC. Suggests activity; observes. TC:P. instructs; requests; initiates; questions; agrees action; imaginative talk; cooperative play. P:TC. Instructs. TC:P^1. Returns single punch; obstructs; parallel play; initiates (invites); offers help; agrees action. P^1:TC. Initiates single punch; obstructs; parallel play; responds; instructs; engages.

The lesson described was typical of those observed. The teacher and TA worked in a co-ordinated way; the teacher led structured teaching segments, whilst the TA supported either the structured task, or pupils who had moved from the table, thereby ensuring that all pupils were supported throughout the day. The TC was demanding of attention, however, ratios were such that this was not an issue.

Tasks were appropriate for the attainment of the pupils and a range of resources were employed to help maintain attention, for example, finding words in story books and playing word bingo.

The teacher judged when pupils' attention waned, and interspersed structured tasks with less structured activities, enabling pupils to interact socially and providing staff with opportunities to develop pupils' skills and knowledge in practical ways. Pupils were drawn back to structured activities when appropriate. Frequent activities with other classes additionally supported the development of pupils' skills.

During the numeracy session, it appeared that the TC chose to avoid activities that he found difficult.

11.3.5 KS 2

Tables 11.6 and 11.7 provide analyses of the experiences of mainstream and special school KS2 pupils during literacy sessions.

Table 11.6. Mainstream KS2 Target Child

Criteria	Mainstream KS2	
Contextual note; objective(s)	Literacy: pupils were withdrawn for a session with the SENCO in the resource area. *Objectives:* • Make notes on and use evidence from across a text to explain events or ideas (year 5) • Identify and summarise evidence from a text to support an hypothesis (year 4)	
Length	Forty eight minutes.	
Adult:pupil ratio	Withdrawn session of 1 SENCO and four pupils.	
Resources	Newspaper article: 'Fantastic Mr Fox'. Changed to newspaper article about penguins; cut-out words (who, where, when).	
Structure (segments), grouping, content	*Segment One 23 minutes*	T introduced task without TC's group. TC/P argued; severely reprimanded by T. SENCO questions situation; clarifies task with T, withdraws group. Read text; discuss; off-task.
	Segment Two 19 minutes	SENCO differentiates task. Pupils engaged, read, discuss, create information board about text, based around who, where, when.
	Segment Three 6 minutes	SENCO recaps; asks pupils to check they have all information. Pupils return to class with completed task.
Interactions T:TC TC:T TC:P P:TC TA:TC TC:TA	*Segment One*	T:TC and P. Severely reprimanded for behaviour. TA: group. Instructs; questions. SENCO:TC. Open questions to check understanding of text, layout, vocabulary; extends; explains; suggests; positive feedback. TC:SENCO. Follows instructions; responds; questions; nods; listens; becomes inappropriate as distracted. TC:P. Argue.
	Segment Two	SENCO:TC. Quietens; reads aloud; open questions; re-focuses; explains vocabulary, task; instructs; provides visual cues; extends responses; corrects; discusses; responds to ideas; positive feedback. TC:SENCO. Responds; suggests ideas; describes; contributes; extends independently; sometimes uses vocabulary incorrectly; listens; focuses; questions; discussion and reasoning. TC:P. Comments; work collaboratively.
	Segment Three	SENCO:TC. Recaps task; reviews responses; questions to ensure completed; discusses; instructs. TC:SENCO. responds; discusses; follows instruction; shows T. T:group. Praise; direction.

The observations conducted consisted of two lessons with the SENCO, each following the format described, a physical education (PE) lesson and a craft session. It is not therefore possible to comment on a typical class lesson, however, from the perspective of the TC's social experience, he worked in the same group of four for each lesson with the SENCO. In other situations, he gravitated towards one of the group in particular, with whom interactions were generally positive. In relation to the whole class, interactions during the observation period were limited.

An important aspect of the lesson analysed was the decision of the SENCO to vary the task. Group behaviour suggested that the pupils did not fully comprehend the set text, hence the SENCO selected a more appropriate piece. In addition, she used questioning and discussion to respond to the task, as opposed to a written response. This approach engaged the pupils, demonstrated where explanation of vocabulary and meaning was needed, and provided opportunities to expand pupils' responses.

Although engaged during the lesson analysed, findings indicated that when interest waned the TC behaved inappropriately with his peer. During a five minute assembly, the TC and peer were reprimanded in excess of five times for talking and moving about.

Two themes emerged; firstly the TC's absence from the classroom. During less structured periods he left the room when he appeared bored, when a peer had gone out, or to get a drink. On the latter occasion, leaving the TA to repair his picture frame.

A second theme was the TC's ability to focus on a task in which he was interested, when it might have been anticipated that noise from peers would have disturbed him. However, once his task was completed to his satisfaction, he joined his peers running about, calling out and talking.

Table 11.7. Special School KS2 Target Child

Criteria	Special School KS2	
Contextual note; objective(s)	Pupils have had whole school assembly, start of day activities and had an active game in the hall. Literacy session. Objective: • Visualise and comment on events, characters and ideas, making imaginative links to their own experiences (year 1).	
Length	Thirty six minutes.	
Adult:pupil ratio	2:7. One teacher, one TA. Teacher led the structured element.	
Resources	Story book; paper; colouring pencils.	
Structure (segments), grouping, content	*Segment One 13 minutes*	1:7, T-led reading story aloud to whole group. Open questions about story events. Relates to pupils and sets task.
	Segment Two 6 minutes	TA-led. Class goes to cupboard in corridor with TA to collect pencils, pens for their pot.
	Segment Three 17 minutes	Independent task, T-supported, draw picture relating to the story. (No plenary; joined by another class at end of session).
Interactions T:TC TC:T TC:P P:TC TA:TC TC:TA	*Segment One*	T:TC: open questions; responds; waits; demonstrates owl sound. TC:T. listens; distracted by peers with teddy; responds most of time; fidgets; smiles at T's comment. TC:P. smiles, shares comment; watches; makes and repeats silly remark and is ignored.
	Segment Two	TA:TC. Instructs; offers choice. TC:TA. Follows directions; excited, "I'm leader"; chooses. TC:P. Holds pen pot to ear and comments; directs.
	Segment Three	T:TC. Instructs; explains; reminds; praises; responds; permits; laughs; comments. TC:T. Comments; makes delighted sound; initiates; asks to return pupil to his room; watches; shows work; laughs. TA:TC. Closed question. TC:TA. Responds.

This lesson was typical of those observed throughout the day. The teacher led the structured learning aspects of the lesson and in conjunction with the TA, moved about the room supporting pupils during the independent task.

The TC was easily distracted whilst the story was read, however, once drawing, he maintained his concentration. The teacher used open questions addressed to different pupils to maintain or re-focus attention during structured sessions, and interspersed tasks with other activities, for example, the active game before the lesson and the collection of pencils part way through. As with KS1, alternative activities offered a break from structured tasks, whilst providing opportunities for pupils to develop additional skills, including social interaction. The development of these skills was additionally supported by joint activity with other classes.

An emergent theme was the ability of the TC to maintain his focus on his drawing, when it may have been anticipated that the behaviour of other pupils would have disturbed him.

11.3.6 KS 3

Tables 11.8 and 11.9 provide analyses of the experiences of KS3 pupils during maths lessons in mainstream and special settings.

Table 11.8. Mainstream KS3 Target Child

Criteria	Mainstream KS3	
Contextual note; objective(s)	Maths lesson: TC worked in a group of 4 throughout the session. Objective: • add, subtract, multiply and divide integers (year 8).	
Length	Forty two minutes.	
Adult:pupil ratio	3:12 one teacher, one TA and a retired teacher fulfilling a TA role. The latter worked with TC throughout in 1:4 ratio. In this table TA refers to retired teacher.	
Resources	Worksheets, paper, counters.	
Structure (segments), grouping, content	*Segment One* *6 minutes*	T-led introduction to topic, question/answer session. TC turned away from class task to work with TA as one of group of 4.
	Segment Two *31 minutes*	TA-led segment. TC worked as one of four with retired T. Continual 1:1 support completing worksheet about 'root of'.
	Segment Three *5 minutes*	T-led review and explains homework. TC given homework by TA.
Interactions T:TC TC:T TC:P P:TC TA:TC TC:TA	*Segment One*	P:TC. Pinch, punch. TC:P. Hurt, distracted. TC:TA. Declares negative view of own ability; turns away from T to work with TA.
	Segment Two	TA:TC. Explains; responds to requests for attention; praise; encouragement; refers to existing knowledge; questions to develop understanding; choral counting; guides process; supports; asks off-task question, laughs, re-focuses group; offers different explanation*; directs; draws; instructs; waits for response; starts sentence waits for TC to complete; suggests; breaks process into steps; extends; observes; listens; checks. *Strategies used: verbal explanation; referral to prior knowledge; choral counting; using counters and circles for visual demonstration; explains need to break down question to component parts.* TC:TA. Listens; registers understanding; demands attention sometimes interrupting; watches; concentrates; thinks/counts aloud; questions; becomes confused; attempts and succeeds; responds; declares inability to complete task; cooperates; distracted (17 secs); asks for help; follows direction; gives answers; clarifies; writes; recognises and corrects mistake; acts independently. P:TC. Negative comment. TC:P. Retaliates. TC/P^{2}. Positive interaction re moving chair. TC:P^{3}. Explains how to calculate using counters/ circles.
	Segment Three	T: class. Counts down to stop. TC:TA. Class homework not for group. TA:TC. Clarifies group homework. T:group. Praise, enthusiasm. TC:P. Compares answers; one different makes her doubt her own understanding.

The lesson analysed was atypical; the level of support provided here was not witnessed in the majority of the TC's lessons. Its selection however, demonstrated a new initiative trialled by the school to support pupils with SEN.

The group of four pupils worked around one table and received the focused attention of the TA (retired teacher) for the full lesson. Each time it became evident that the TC did not understand a process, the teaching strategy was changed; five different strategies were used. The outcome of the lesson was that the TC explained a previously not understood concept, correctly to a peer. In other lessons the TC was not observed to receive the same level of individual attention, indeed she was not treated differently from her peers and the range of teaching strategies employed was less.

With regards to social interaction, during the lesson analysed the TC initially sat slightly apart from her peers and they did not seek seats near her; she was mocked on one occasion, but otherwise interacted confidently with peers at her table.

An emergent theme was the TC's desire to avoid failure. She was demanding of attention, sought support to complete tasks correctly and reassurance that she had the correct answer. This was not a problem in the situation analysed, however, it could be demanding of teachers' time when they worked alone with a

class. On one occasion she was observed completing answers whilst discussed in class to avoid incorrect answers or gaps in her work.

Table 11.9. Special School KS3 Target Child

Criteria	Special School KS3	
Contextual note; objective(s)	Maths lesson: group observation. The lesson objective was not identified.	
Length	Sixty minutes.	
Adult:pupil ratio	2:8. One teacher, one TA.	
Resources	Work books; whiteboard.	
Structure (segments), grouping, content	*Segment One 23 minutes*	T-led whole class session (interrupted by poor behaviour of pupil who left room, followed by teacher). Returned homework; as a group re-capped work, asked pupils questions in turn.
	Segment Two 37 minutes	T and TA-supported individual work in books. Pupils sat in table of 3 and of 4. Misbehaving pupil stayed at back of classroom and was instructed to remain quiet.
Interactions T:TC TC:T TC:P P:TC TA:TC TC:TA	*Segment One*	T:class. Questions each pupil in turn; supports to find answer using verbal and visual explanation; shares joke; laughs; directs. Class:T. Two pupils misbehaving, one leaves room. Other sits near peer (later identified as TC). Former returns to back of classroom where he stays for remainder of lesson. Six pupils on task for majority of lesson. P:TC. Peer near TC shoves table towards her, she laughs, he moves it back. He remains quiet in teacher's presence.
	Segment Two	T/TA:class. Supported continuously; maintained focus; frequent positive comments; praised; encouraged; instructions broken into small steps; demonstrated; explained; questioned to check understanding; directed. Class:T/TA. Responded; focused; listened.

The lesson described above was typical of those observed. Pupils received a substantial amount of individual attention, instructions were broken down into steps and repeated and teachers used discussion as a teaching tool. Teachers were prepared to change activity during lessons if necessary, for example, the maths teacher had practical tasks available, the science teacher provided pupils with crystal making kits for good behaviour, and the food technology teacher allowed free time on the computers.

In mainstream and special settings, lessons were frequently interrupted due to the poor behaviour of some pupils (not those being observed). This involved teachers and pupils leaving classrooms, or teachers dealing with situations in situ, delaying lessons and taking attention from the remaining pupils.

In the special school, pupils interacted positively with each other, however, two pupils caused disruption throughout the observation period. Whilst the behaviour was managed effectively by teachers for the majority of the time, on one occasion these pupils undermined a lesson for its duration, by engaging their peers in discussion and off-task activity.

In both settings, as observed in KS2, where the target children were focused on a task, peers' poor behaviour did not appear to disturb them. When lacking focus however, the pupils could become part of the issue.

11.3.7 KS 4

Tables 11.10 and 11.11 provide analyses of the experiences of KS4 pupils in maths (mainstream) and music (special school) lessons.

Table 11.10. Mainstream KS4 Target Child

Criteria	Mainstream KS4	
Contextual note; objective(s)	Maths: having missed a previous lesson on this topic the TC received additional support from T. *Objectives:* • round positive whole numbers to the nearest 10, 100 or 1000… • recognise and use multiples, factors, primes (less than 100), common factors, highest common factors…(year 7).	
Length	Forty seven minutes.	
Adult:pupil ratio	2:12. One teacher and one TA.	
Resources	Whiteboard; workbooks.	
Structure (segments), grouping, content	*Segment One 3 minutes*	T-led whole group introduction; questions put on board (factors of 30; take number in words and translate to digits; round to nearest hundred; fraction).
	Segment Two 40 minutes	P-led, T and TA-supported individual calculations.
	Segment Three 4 minutes	T-led whole group review.
Interactions T:TC TC:T TC:P P:TC TA:TC TC:TA	*Segment One*	T:class. Writes questions; instructs; circulates. TC: silent; listens; acts independently
	Segment Two	T:TC. Recognises TC's prior absence; checks understanding; questions; provides step-by-step explanations; confirms; changes explanation; observes class confusion; reassures; encourages; sits with TC; recognises barrier in process, removes; instructs; demonstrates in writing; clarifies task; adds extra questions to reinforce understanding. TC:T. Responsive; focused (frowns); quiet; listens; writes; watches; nods; seeks help; registers understanding; works independently. TA:TC. Observes; explains; supports with resources; questions; clarifies; confirms right. TC:TA. Responds; follows instructions; listens. P:TC. Calls for attention, returns sharpener.
	Segment Three	T:class. Stops; recaps; acknowledges difficulty with tables. TC:T. Listens.

The lesson analysed was atypical in that the TC received more individual support than was observed in the majority of lessons, and she approached the teacher for help. It was a typical lesson in that the TC sat apart from and interacted little with

her peers and worked quietly and independently, other than when seeking direction. It was also typical in terms of the nature of the task which was writing-based. Only the history teacher employed a range of activities, for example, cutting and sticking, a video, a question and answer session and included a four minute break.

As observed in KS3, an emergent theme was the impact of poor behaviour on a class. Teachers lost time dealing with behavioural issues, deflecting them from their role supporting well-behaved pupils. History and PHSE were the only mainstream lessons observed that were uninterrupted by poor behaviour. The former consisted of varied tasks and the teacher maintained the pace of the lesson. The latter concerned further education which was of concern to pupils. The TC appeared able to ignore constant noise and poor behaviour; explaining that it was usually easy to concentrate unless the work was hard.

A second emerging theme was that the TC appeared to avoid contact with her peers and teachers unless necessary. On one occasion she raised her hand to answer a question, but was cut off during her response by a peer and unable to finish. On occasions when she was directed to work with peers she appeared reluctant, remaining quiet as opposed to initiating discourse. On one occasion she was grouped with two peers who were observed deliberately excluding her from the activity.

Table 11.11. Special School KS4 Target Child

Criteria	Special School KS4	
Contextual note; objective(s)	Music: Six pupils worked in pairs. Objective: to produce the lyrics to a song.	
Length	Fifty two minutes.	
Adult:pupil ratio	2:6. One teacher, one TA.	
Resources	CD, newspaper, cutting/gluing.	
Structure (segments), grouping, content	*Segment One 7 minutes*	T-led whole class explanation: cut words from newspaper and make up song lyrics with them, gluing words on sheet. Initially listen to song and discuss.
	Segment Two 40 minutes	P-led, T and TA-supported work in pairs to create lyrics.
	Segment Three 5 minutes	T-led review task. Look at each pair's work and discuss thoughts.
Interactions T:TC TC:T TC:P P:TC TA:TC TC:TA	*Segment One*	T:class. Explains; suggests things to consider as listen to song; discusses their views and expands. TC:T. expresses view; listens.
	Segment Two	T:TC. Instructs; confirms instruction; clarifies task; supports; encourages; maintains pace; praises; reinforces praise; suggests ideas, changes; responds to requests; comments; shares humour. TC:T. Clarifies instruction twice; quiet refusal to work as pair, works independently throughout; acknowledges task; frequently seeks reassurance and support; shares joke; shy to praise (grimace, "yeah right"); little cheeky; quiet, watches; listens. P:TC. Questions; discuss television; shares resource. TC:P. Responds; request; question; sometimes joins in conversation (always brief); ignores when rude; expresses irritation; watches; listens; nods.
	Segment Three	T:class. Reviews task; reads each set of lyrics; requests thoughts. T:TC. Sings lyrics; feeds back. TC:T. Expresses views; responds to questions.

As the pupil was approaching the end of her secondary school career, several lessons were used for further education preparation rather than usual curriculum activity, making it difficult to identify a typical lesson. However, the two lessons that occurred as usual followed the format described above and teachers

interacted similarly with pupils. The music teacher created a relaxed and positive environment, listened to and expanded pupils' views and made suggestions for progressing their task.

Teachers generally incorporated a variety of activities in their lessons, for example, cutting and sticking, using computers for research, using interactive whiteboards and completing individual projects.

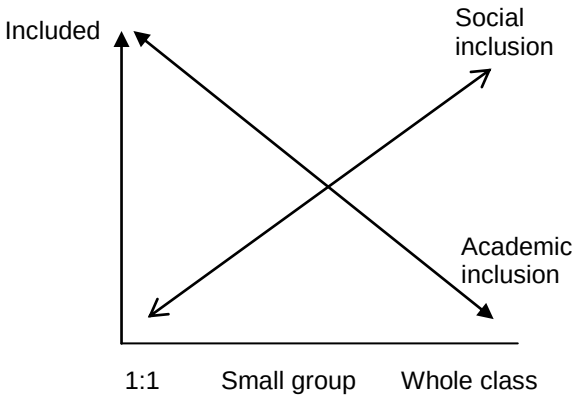
The TC was the only girl in her class and like her mainstream counterpart, she appeared to seek seats slightly apart from her peers. She interacted confidently with them, however, it was usually they who initiated interactions. She ignored comments made by them that she deemed 'rude'.

11.4 Discussion

Observing pupils in their educational context provided an opportunity to witness their everyday experience of inclusion. In the Foundation Stage, inclusion was integral to the functioning of the nursery. It is unlikely that an uninformed observer would have identified that the pupil being observed had any special needs. This was achieved by providing activities appropriate for all children and ensuring that the way in which children interacted with the activities, and were supported by staff, provided a learning experience that was appropriate for each individual.

In the mainstream KS1 context, observation suggested that in a one-to-one situation, whilst the pupil with MLD was not included in a social sense in the class, he was included from an academic perspective. As group size increased and hence his inclusion socially increased, so his academic inclusion reduced (figure 11.1). Tasks were differentiated for groups of differing ability, although not always sufficiently differentiated for individuals within the group. However, whole class sessions did not seem to take account of these different abilities, hence as the group size increased, tasks became more inaccessible to the pupil with MLD, frequently leading to off-task, inappropriate behaviour.

Figure 11.1: Mainstream KS1 inclusion



The presence of the TA impacted on the KS1 pupil's experience significantly, since she was the only provider of additional support and focused and directed his activity continually. Under her supervision, the pupil completed very little of his work independently, which may have impacted on his ability to perform

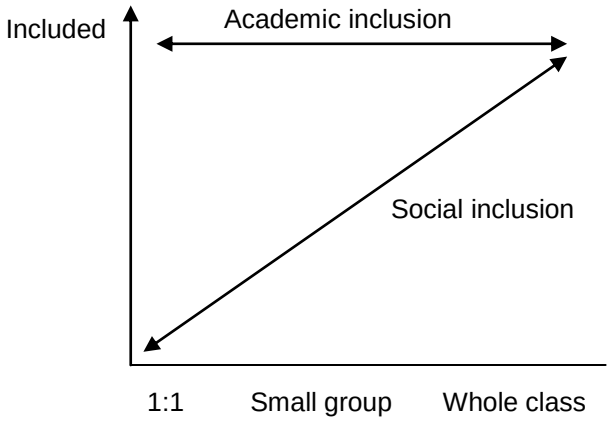
independently in her absence. Without her direction, the pupil remained off-task for the majority of the time.

In the mainstream KS2 classroom, the group of lower-ability pupils was initially tasked with working with the whole class text, under the supervision of the TA. On withdrawing the pupils, the SENCO recognised the difficulties that the group had with the task and used her authority and knowledge to change the text to one better suited to the group's ability. This brings into question the fit of task to ability for individuals in this group and the effectiveness of their learning if tasks are too difficult. As in KS1, it is possible that as social inclusion increased, academic inclusion may have reduced.

Although in a segregated setting, the special school primary pupils similarly experienced individual, small group and large group contexts. In each situation they were included from an academic perspective with activities and tasks made accessible to them. Figure 11.2 shows the special school primary pupils' social and academic inclusion trajectories.

Support for pupils in KS1 and KS2 in the special school was substantial and ensured that pupils could be focused and directed continually. When interest waned, alternative activities were available that provided additional learning opportunities. Thus the school day was effectively utilised and pupils did not have opportunities for inappropriate behaviour.

Figure 11.2: Special School KS1 inclusion



The mainstream secondary school demonstrated its commitment to SEN provision with its SEN department and continually evolving methods of supporting pupils in core-subjects. However, the commitment of some staff to supporting pupils with MLD was not demonstrated, indeed in one lesson the supply teacher had not been made aware that the KS3 pupil had MLD. Ratios of staff to pupils were more favourable in core subjects where TAs were present and class sizes smaller. In non-core subjects teachers worked alone with greater numbers of pupils.

Identifying the level of academic inclusion in the secondary years was difficult. Unlike the primary pupils, secondary classes had no obvious grouping, other than in maths, and it was rare for a TA to work with individual pupils for the duration of the lesson. Mainstream secondary pupils appeared to undertake the work that they were set independently. In maths each was well supported. In other lessons there was no evidence to suggest that they struggled with tasks. The practice of

streaming may have benefitted the pupils in terms of tasks being appropriate for their abilities. Special school pupils similarly seemed to manage their work independently, however, they benefitted from the continuous support of teachers and TAs.

In terms of social participation, neither the KS3 nor KS4 mainstream pupils were integrated members of the class. The former was mocked and teased and the latter remained quiet, rarely interacting with peers or staff. In contrast, the special school secondary pupils were included socially by their peers, even though the KS4 pupil tended not to initiate conversation, which was likely to be because she was the only girl in her class.

Emergent themes showed some commonalities between KSs. Firstly, the reliance of pupils with MLD, particularly up to KS3, on teachers, SENCOs and TAs to closely direct and support their activity. Whilst working closely with a knowledgeable adult on tasks that engaged them, pupils remained focused and achieved desired outcomes, even in situations when it may have been anticipated that background noise would have disturbed them. Without those levels of supervision and engagement, pupils were observed to engage in off-task, inappropriate behaviour, such as talking, running about and eating sweets. Mainstream primary pupils were observed to leave the classroom for periods of time when they were not engaged.

A second emergent theme was that the behaviour of some pupils impacted on pupils with MLD mainly in KS3 in both mainstream and special settings and in mainstream KS4, by interrupting lessons and taking teachers' time from well-behaved pupils. In the mainstream KS4, it was observed that only two lessons did not have any behavioural incidents; one related to higher education and was therefore relevant to all attendees; in the second the teacher employed a range of teaching techniques and resources, and maintained a pace that engaged the pupils for the majority of the lesson. In the special school all classes had a range of tasks and activities available, and a level of supervision that ensured all time was effectively used. The evidence indicated that the skill of the teacher in engaging all pupils, not only those with MLD, with the task was key to an effective, uninterrupted lesson.

In general pupils with MLD did not appear to have any negative impact on their peers. However, their presence in the classroom did place significant demands on teachers' knowledge and skills, in terms of planning effectively for them and supporting their learning in class. Some of the pupils observed, the mainstream KS1 and KS3 pupils in particular, were demanding of teachers' and TAs' time and attention. In the case of the former this did have a detrimental effect on his peers in one instance, however, this was not continuous.

A third emergent theme was the preference of mainstream KS3 and mainstream and special KS4 pupils, to remove themselves from their peers, in terms of their

physical place in the classroom. Particularly in the mainstream setting, this seemed to suggest a difference between them and their peers, indicating that socially they were not fully included.

11.5 Conclusion

The experiences of individual pupils appeared to be influenced by teachers rather than settings, by the way in which teachers deployed adults in their classrooms (and nursery), and by the differentiation of all aspects of each lesson, rather than solely the differentiation of individual/group tasks. The skill and knowledge of the teacher in explaining concepts and processes, was demonstrated to be of particular importance in the learning process for pupils with MLD. These elements either supported or prevented individuals' access to the curriculum.

Special school pupils benefitted from high staff-to-pupil ratios that ensured that pupils received constant support from knowledgeable adults. However, the mainstream history teacher demonstrated that a class could be engaged by the use of a variety of well focused activities, appropriately paced and supportive adult-pupil interaction. Once again demonstrating the skill of the teacher.

Primary pupils in the special school were observed to spend less time off-task than mainstream primary pupils. They were closely supervised as discussed, however, the use of a number of different tasks in structured sessions maintained

their attention, and the availability of alternative activities ensured that all time was used effectively.

In terms of the continuous policy cycle (Bowe *et al*, 1992), observations suggest that practice reflects the lack of clarity in government policy, most obviously by having mainstream and special provision. Policy reflects ideals and aspirations and practitioners in schools must decide what this means in practical terms; whether pupils are to be included in every aspect of classroom activity, whether or not it matches their attainments, or whether they should be withdrawn to work in groups that do meet their needs. Practitioner responses to such issues vary between and within schools. These issues will be addressed in the next chapter which draws together the evidence gathered from literature, Hansard debates, interviews, survey and observations.

CHAPTER 12

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

12.0 Introduction

The focus of this thesis has been the current policy-to-practice context for IE in England for children with MLD. The investigation was centred in one London Borough and was conducted using a mixed methods approach within the framework of the continuous policy cycle (Bowe *et al, 1992*), examining the contexts of influence, policy text production and practice.

In this final chapter, the findings will be drawn together and discussed, identifying the key findings in respect of each research question and the implications in terms of theoretical concepts, future policy and LA practice.

1. What is the policy to practice context for inclusion of pupils with MLD?
2. How do schools (head teachers and teachers) implement the policy regarding the inclusion of pupils with MLD?
3. What are the experiences of teachers and pupils with MLD in special and inclusive settings?
4. What are the views of the variety of stakeholders tasked with implementation of inclusion policy as practised at the school level?
5. What are the views of MLD pupils of inclusion policy as experienced by them?

Allocating evidence to address specific research questions has proved challenging. The policy to practice context of SEN consists of many elements and themes that overlap and so evidence that addresses one question invariably informs others. As this chapter unfolds, aspects of SEN will be addressed initially from one perspective and then re-visited from another later.

12.1 What is the policy to practice context for inclusion of pupils with MLD?

The policy to practice context for inclusion has been examined using the Bowe *et al* (1992) model of the contexts of policy making. This has ensured a thorough investigation of the influences on policy direction; the process of developing policy in Parliament through to the publication of policy text; the (re)interpretation of national policy in a local context and its enactment by practitioners.

12.1.1 Context of Influence

The context of influence was the first element of the cycle to be examined. At an international level, inclusion is situated within the field of human rights. The Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) in particular, required that education systems should be developed to take account of diversity and that the use of special provision should be seen as a last resort. This directive was issued despite a lack of evidence of the superiority for either special or mainstream provision (Lindsay, 2003). However, if considered from the perspective of rights, it

could be argued that evidence supporting the superiority of mainstream provision is unnecessary. The human rights approach supports full inclusion, seeing segregated education as a violation of children's rights.

More moderate voices continued to argue the need for special provision and English legislation champions the right of parents to choose their child's education, necessitating the continuation of special provision. There is therefore a tension between international directives and English legislation.

Hansard texts provided a window onto the changing context of SEN at points in time. They showed that MPs referred to international legislation infrequently. Those MPs who spoke most passionately about SEN, did so from the position of their own personal experiences and constituency perspectives. Whether or not international law was explicitly referred to, successive Governments developed legislation that supported inclusion and hence met the requirements of international legislation. Despite the content of policies, Hansard texts demonstrated that MPs continued to identify a need for special provision across time.

12.1.2 Context of policy text production

Policy text is written to be applicable in many contexts and is therefore necessarily general. As Ball (Mainardes and Marcondes, 2009: 306) noted, it is written: "…in

relation to the best of all possible schools…with little acknowledgement of variations in context, in resources or in local capabilities.". The ambiguity of text combined with the differing contexts and experiences of those required to interpret and enact it, creates a spectrum of responses in practice, making it difficult for Government to control policy outcomes (Bowe *et al,* 1992; Mainardes and Marcondes, 2009).

In 2005 the Government was accused of having a policy to close all special schools (HC Debs. Vol.435, col.820-876). Such a requirement was not articulated in inclusive policy text. Indeed none of the Hansard texts examined, provided evidence of specific direction from Government to LAs to close special schools. However, during the 2001 debate (HC Debs. Vol.365, col.228) it was suggested that if the Government wanted special schools to remain open, they should write it in policy, implying that its omission would indicate a closure policy. This demonstrates the complexity of creating policy text that is at once, sufficiently general to apply in all contexts and yet specific enough to prevent action being taken based on what is not written there. The analysis of the 2005 debate, suggested that the disparate activity taking place across LAs was not a response to an implied agenda to close special schools. Rather LAs were interpreting and enacting policy text in a manner that they argued best met local needs, whether or not their local population agreed. Hansard texts indicated that many parents found themselves at odds with their LA over provision for their child. Although parents' rights have been strengthened in policy, in practice, bureaucracy can

reduce their involvement in the school selection process (Riddell *et al*, 2005; HC, 2006), and reliance upon LAs to issue statements, can frustrate their attempts to send their child to the school of their choice (Warnock, 2007).

12.1.3 Context of Practice

Hansard texts demonstrated that whilst LAs were heavily criticised by MPs in relation to SEN provision, they were required to balance the needs of all pupils, share limited resources equitably, and meet legal obligations to pupils with SEN, within budgetary limits. One MP, noted the inequity inherent in education policy; the law protects provision for some children with SEN, to the possible detriment of others. The supply of resource in the education system is allocated in general terms for SEN, as opposed to being allocated to address specific need; it provides parents with rights to claim a greater proportion of funding for their child, and requires LAs to meet all of the needs of children with SEN, as opposed to providing them with equal opportunities (Evans, 2007). Policy fails to provide direction in relation to the allocation of funding for SEN, accounting for the inconsistency in the funding of SEN provision across LAs (Ainscow *et al*, 1999; Farrell, 2001; Audit Commission, 1992).

Resourcing has been a source of contention in Parliament over the period reviewed. Hansard texts and literature (DES, 1978; Croll and Moses, 2000; Ainscow *et al*, 1999; UNESCO, 2005) concurred that the development of an IE

system required significant funding, which was not forthcoming. Participants in the school survey noted that inclusion should not be seen as a cost-saving exercise. Hansard texts showed that, whilst MPs complained about the inconsistent allocation of funding for SEN by LAs, the Government remained reluctant to allocate funding directly to schools, considering that to do so could threaten LA services, which survey and interview findings indicated were valued. Hansard texts evidenced further Government funding dilemmas such as: reducing spend on statements to fund improved SEN provision in mainstream settings, could create an increased demand; the increasing cost per capita spent on special education could be difficult to justify in the context of inclusion.

The allocation of SEN funding is a complicated process, hindered by the lack of definition of MLD and the associated difficulties of identifying best practice and effective provision. Warnock (DES, 1978) directed practice away from categorising pupils and moved forward the notion of the social model of disability and the continuum of needs. However, not providing and defining categories has not prevented their use; instead it has created a situation where professionals lack the shared SEN vocabulary that aids liaison and discussion.

The lack of MLD group identification and cohesion creates difficulties in gathering meaningful data from which to improve knowledge and understanding of MLD and thus identify best practice and interventions. Without the support of a pressure group, there are few references to MLD in Parliamentary debate.

The wide range of type and severity of need encompassed within MLD is such that some pupils will be found in special provision, others in mainstream. In 1981, it was predicted that the failure to identify the levels of SEN that would trigger additional provision and the issue of statements, would lead to inconsistencies in practice across LAs (HC Debs. Vol.998, col.32). However, Hansard texts (HC Debs. Vol.210, col.1075, 1078, 1084, 1123) provided evidence that factors other than the determining line for levels of SEN were important in the issue of statements, for example the involvement of lawyers and voluntary organisations. It was recognised that articulate middle-class parents used the system to obtain support for their child; a view supported by school survey and interview findings, which also indicated that parents found it easier to obtain statements, where they were supported or represented by schools and agencies.

The social model of disability, favoured by Warnock (DES, 1978) requires practitioners to identify and remove barriers to learning that exist in the environment (Lindsay, 2007; Terzi, 2007). However, in practice, the issue of statements and the reporting of data, required attention to be focused on individual difficulties; a medical model perspective. Since data supports the identification of best practice and interventions for pupils with MLD, it suggests that aspects of the medical model continue to be relevant to practice.

Observations provided a complicated picture of the different models of disability in operation in settings. In mainstream primary classrooms the medical model was

in evidence; practice suggested an integrated approach to education, in which pupils were provided with additional support, but neither social nor environmental aspects of their environment appeared to be addressed. However, the practice of the mainstream primary SENCO during a withdrawal session, demonstrated consideration of individual and environmental aspects of pupils' learning, in terms of their location and differentiated materials and additionally incorporated social factors, in the form of turn-taking and co-operative working.

In the mainstream secondary, observations demonstrated a similar varied approach. In the SEN department and in one lesson observed, environmental, individual and social needs were addressed, through consideration of the environment, teaching methods, varied activities and social interaction. The SENCO directed activity across the school aimed at supporting and including pupils with SEN. However, one interview participant suggested that the SENCO's approach was not necessarily reflected throughout. Approaches varied across different classes: in some, there was a model of integration: children with MLD were in attendance, but there did not appear to be any additional support or consideration of their needs; in others, they received substantial additional support with their learning, however, environmental and social aspects of the environment were not necessarily taken into account; in others there was evidence of both individual needs and environmental considerations although social aspects were not observed.

There is evidence (Connors and Stalker, 2007) that the medical model is still evident in special schools, where impairments are more openly discussed. Special school interview findings demonstrated that there was a focus on individual difficulties; a within-child approach. However, despite being a segregated setting, classroom practice demonstrated that practitioners identified a variety of tasks to meet group and individual needs, provided an environment to accommodate a variety of activities and supported pupils' social development and engagement through interaction with peers.

Skidmore (2004, cited in Sheehy *et al*, 2009) considered that inclusive settings approached planning from the perspective of the curriculum, the subject to be learned, and how to make this accessible to all. This approach was demonstrated by the nursery. Practitioner interviews indicated that environmental barriers that had previously interfered with children's learning had been removed. Activities were designed with every child in mind. Observations and interviews showed that the support of individual needs was delivered through scaffolding by practitioners, who also supported the development of social skills. Skidmore's (2004) description suggests that the nursery approach is indicative of an inclusive environment. In terms of models of disability, the nursery provided evidence of both medical and social models in addition to a focus on social development. It could therefore be inferred that an inclusive setting takes account of individual needs, environmental factors and the social interaction of pupils.

A model of disability that reflects the nursery practice is the bio-psycho-social (interactive) model (Norwich and Kelly, 2005; Farrell, 2005), which moves thinking towards a wider view of disability that takes account of individual characteristics as well as the physical and social contexts. The medical and social models have been criticised for their narrow approach to disability; the observation findings demonstrated the impact of resulting practice on pupils, where one or other model dominated practitioner thinking. The interactive model of disability, takes account of the complexities of the different elements of the educational context and the interaction between these elements. Farrell (2005) suggested that such an approach supported an inclusive focus that would respond to the perceived needs of all pupils.

The interactive model was evidenced in the whole setting contexts of the nursery and the special school, and in individual classrooms and withdrawal sessions in other settings. This suggests that a focus towards inclusive practice is determined by practitioners acting as a team or individually and taking account of each pupil's different elements of need. The importance of the practitioner in inclusive practice, was demonstrated in research by Kugelmass and Ainscow (2004), who identified three aspects to the concept of culture that affect inclusion; staff values and attitudes; the willingness of staff to collaborate across specialisms; and the willingness of leaders to create collaborative environments. The evidence described above supports this finding.

Whilst an interactive model of disability is considered to focus practice towards inclusion, a specific definition of inclusion has proved illusive. The consistent enactment of policy requires clarity and shared understanding of the key concepts in policy text. Findings from different data sets suggested that a single, shared understanding of inclusion was absent from practice. Special school practitioners interviewed, referred to inclusion in terms of location; survey findings from mainstream primary practitioners demonstrated that they viewed inclusion in terms of their provision of an inclusive education, that is their inputs, whilst parents in the survey viewed inclusion in social terms. One dilemma that was evident from the survey data describing inclusion, was whether all children should be treated in the same way, or differently according to ability. At present, as discussed, the system favours children with SEN in the allocation of resources.

Several theories suggest ways to achieve equity for all children in education: Sen's capability approach identifies what is needed by an individual within a specific context, to function in the way that their peers function in that same context (Terzi, 2007). Evans distributive justice approach (2007), discussed previously in terms of current inequity in supply, is similar. Rather than allocating the same resources to each child, resources are allocated according to perceived need; the latter taking account of: "…inequalities that pre-exist on the demand side…" (Evans, 2007:88), in effect providing that which is needed to level the playing field. Norwich and Gray's 'flexible interacting continua of provision' (2007, cited in Norwich, 2008), requires practitioners to take account of five aspects of

education provision in practice: the identification of difficulties; academic and social participation; location; curriculum focus; teaching strategies and level of governance. The elements are similar to those addressed when considering the bio-psycho-social model of disability (Norwich and Kelly, 2005; Farrell, 2005). The aim of each model is to balance the various elements of education in order to facilitate the equitable provision of education in practice. Lindsay (2003) suggested that there should be a focus on outcomes and experiences as opposed to inputs and settings, thereby supporting the provision of equal opportunity and drawing attention to the effectiveness of education.

This discussion has demonstrated the dilemmas, tensions and ambiguities that form the context within which the education of pupils with MLD lies; the human rights argument that opposes parental choice; ambiguous policy text that has led to inconsistent practice in a number of directions; the dilemmas of funding and inequities built in to the education system; the lack of definition and understanding of MLD that affects provision; the different models of disability evidenced and the impact of these on practice, and the lack of a shared understanding of the meaning of an inclusive education in terms of practice.

12.2 How do schools (head teachers and teachers) implement the policy regarding the inclusion of pupils with MLD?

This discussion focuses on school issues at the level of policy rather than practice; the latter being addressed in section 12.3. However, as previously, there will be some overlap between the two. In addition LA findings will be incorporated where it is considered that to do so will enhance the discussion.

In section 12.1 the lack of definition of inclusive practice was discussed. This failure to define practice at the national policy level, was reflected in the different approaches to inclusion taken by the settings in this study. School interview and observation evidence demonstrated how each school had interpreted inclusion, resulting in the practice outlined in section 12.1.

In the nursery, the head teacher held a clear vision, shared with staff, about the direction in which SEN provision should progress. The mainstream primary head teacher had a strong sense of direction for future SEN provision and had initiated a full review of school practice. The mainstream secondary school had a well-established SEN department led by the SENCO with the support of the deputy head teacher. There was a sense, however, that responsibility for SEN lay with the SENCO and that the SEN department worked in parallel with, rather than at the heart of, the school.

Hansard texts indicated that the lack of Government direction with regard to special schools, had caused confusion about their role. The Strategy for SEN (DfES, 2004) referred to them as providing outreach support, training and support for co-location. The special school was in a period of transition in terms of role and location; a move to co-located premises was anticipated and the school was developing an outreach service. Practitioners observed a changing population towards severe learning difficulties, suggesting that LA inclusive policy was taking effect.

Ofsted (2004) reported that mainstream head teachers were reluctant to have a reputation for being effective in supporting pupils with SEN, in an effort to protect the balance of their intake. One head teacher in the survey referred to the increasing numbers of pupils with SEN entering the school as a consequence of their good reputation with SEN provision. The Warnock Report (DES 1978) warned that numbers of pupils with SEN in a school should not be such that they changed the nature of the school or caused a sub-group to develop, however, literature referred to the lack of research relating to optimum numbers of pupils with SEN in a school/class.

National issues and dilemmas relating to the funding of SEN provision have been discussed and the LA approach to funding will be considered in section 12.4. The OECD (2004) considered that additional resources and the quality of teaching

impacted significantly upon the equity of provision. Quality of teaching will be addressed in section 12.3; at this point, the issue of resourcing will be discussed.

Survey data indicated that IE was considered to require funding, resources and materials. Analysis of survey and school interview data indicated a desire amongst practitioners for more funding, to improve classroom resources, increase staff and provide more training. Head teachers in the survey, indicated that this may be achieved through, for example, increased funding; prioritising development; and early intervention programmes.

The allocation of resources (including TAs) was reported by most head teachers, to be according to need. Interview findings described: competing priorities for funds, stretching budgets, “cajoling” funds from different pots, and seeking grants to support pupils with SEN. The most cost-effective suppliers were selected, decisions made about filling job vacancies, and provision mixed to meet needs as effectively as possible.

LA services were valued by schools, according to survey and interview findings, however, long waiting lists, a lack of time allocated to schools and a high staff turnover were issues mentioned.

Reviewing practice was reported to enable head teachers to deploy resources effectively in support of pupils with MLD, identify effective techniques and teaching

methods and additionally identify training needs. The Audit Commission (2009) indicated that whilst schools considered cost-effectiveness in the allocation of SEN funding, they took no account of either cost-efficiency or economy. The findings presented suggest otherwise.

Analysis of the survey, school and parent interview data provided evidence of the ambiguity surrounding the group referred to as MLD and demonstrated the wide range of type and severity of need incorporated. The survey evidence demonstrated the possibility of a link between job role and features of MLD identified. It was also recognised that features such as low self-esteem and lack of confidence developed as children aged and became aware of their difficulties. An overall picture obtained from the findings indicated a group of quiet children, lacking in confidence and self-esteem, referred to by one participant as the "invisible ones".

The need for practitioner training, to support the development of an inclusive system, has been debated frequently in Parliament across the period examined. Teachers require knowledge and skills in relation to, for example, the use of appropriate tasks, different modes of teaching, and scaffolding learning (Sheehy et al, 2009). Head teachers in the school survey indicated that training needs were identified by a range of focused methods, such as the identification of individual strengths and areas for development. However, school interview

findings suggested a less formal approach of practitioners applying for courses that they felt were applicable.

School interview findings (non-TA roles) cited difficulties for TAs in attending training such as working hours and providing cover. However, nursery and secondary TAs were well trained and attended courses as appropriate, suggesting that the lack of training of TAs in other settings, perhaps had more to do with assumptions made by other staff, than with TAs themselves.

Research by Attfield and Williams (2003), suggested that, in order for mainstream staff to increase in confidence and skills, their training and development must encompass a wider scope than course attendance alone. Survey findings identified CPD opportunities such as, courses, shadowing colleagues and working with external professionals. However, few staff took advantage of them due to cost and time difficulties. Of those who did, the majority of CPD took the form of short courses. With the exception of the nursery and secondary SEN department, analysis of interview data provided little evidence of development activity as opposed to training. In the nursery, interview findings indicated that training needs were addressed by targeted training, in a timely fashion and practice benefitted from the support of an academic mentor. Despite citing benefits of networking, most SENCOs were critical of LA networking opportunities and did not attend.

LA participants noted reluctance by schools to participate in training, even when funding was available. Data suggested that this may have been due to a focus on the National Strategies. This study supported the finding by MacBeath *et al* (2006), that training was not always appropriate to meet needs and did not take place due to difficulties with providing staff cover.

Ofsted (2006) identified that evaluation of training was lacking. Whilst survey findings suggested that evaluation was being conducted to a detailed level, one survey response and interview findings reported that most head teachers discussed courses with staff and supported the dissemination of knowledge, however, despite participants recognising the value of evaluation, it was not carried out to detailed levels. It was suggested that it was sometimes difficult and time-consuming.

12.3 What are the experiences of teachers and pupils with MLD in special and inclusive settings?

Discussion focuses on the practical enactment of policy in schools and is considered in relation to: classroom management, pedagogy, social aspects of education and the school-parent partnership.

12.3.1 Classroom management

Feedback from schools to the LA suggested that TAs were being effectively deployed, although the latter was not defined. Blatchford *et al* (2009) suggested that in order for TAs to be effectively deployed, it was necessary to be clear about their role and the impact they were expected to have on outcomes. Analysis of interview and observation data indicated that nursery and mainstream secondary TAs were well trained and informed, managed by the teacher/SENCO and observed to function without constant supervision. The secondary TA function was to provide support for pupils with SEN across classes, each within a specified faculty. Special school TAs were trained and familiar with their role which was to support pupils in specific classes, in co-ordination with teachers. Survey and observation findings indicated that mainstream primary TAs were involved in supporting pupils with MLD, as well as general classroom support.

The quality and availability of support is considered to impact upon the effectiveness of provision in mainstream settings (Farrell, 2001; Lewis and Norwich, 2001; Blatchford *et al* 2008; Brook, 2008). LA participants recognised that many of the most needy children were being supported by the least qualified members of staff; a situation also identified in literature (MacBeath *et al*, 2006; Ainscow *et al*, 1999). Survey findings concurred indicating a lack of qualification on entry and subsequent training consisting of one day or short courses.

However, LA and school interview findings indicated that more applications were being received for TA positions from graduates.

LA participants recognised a dilemma facing teachers; either they worked with the pupils with MLD themselves, possibly to the detriment of more able pupils, or they delegated to TAs, possibly to the detriment of the pupil with MLD. It was noted that teachers were instructed to use TAs effectively which may have been interpreted as placing TAs with the most needy pupils. Wedell (2005) suggested that teachers would be better utilised working with children with SEN themselves and leaving TAs to work with other pupils. Blatchford *et al* (2009) agreed, identifying that TAs lacked teachers' abilities and skills in scaffolding pupils' learning, being more inclined to provide answers. This latter point is illustrated by two examples from the observation data. In one situation the mainstream KS1 pupil was supported by a TA to the extent that he did little independently: answers were provided. In the second example the mainstream KS3 pupil was supported by a retired teacher during maths who scaffolded her learning and increased her independence.

Ofsted (2006) stated that a TA was not a substitute for a teacher, although it was noted that where TAs provided good quality support, they would have been well trained, qualified and would additionally support pupils' social interaction and independence. Interview findings demonstrated that secondary TAs met this description. It was observed that the mainstream KS1 pupil relied heavily on the

TA to direct his activity, to the detriment of independent activity. This example supports the findings of Blatchford *et al* (2009), who identified that the more time a pupil has with a TA, the less they have with the teacher; the TA therefore becomes an alternative to a teacher as opposed to providing additional support. Survey findings suggested that pupils with MLD opted out of learning in class, relying on adult support. It could be argued that this perspective takes the onus off teachers to act to support them.

MacBeath et al (2006) and Blatchford et al (2009) reported that teachers had to manage TAs, however, they lacked time to plan, consult, make resources and sometimes, the knowledge and skill necessary. LA and school interview findings supported this, suggesting that the shorter working hours and lack of availability of TAs outside school hours, created difficulties with co-ordination and planning. In addition it was reported that teachers lacked time for liaison. Constant movement between classes was reported to inhibit co-ordination and planning between teachers and TAs in the secondary mainstream.

Survey findings suggested possible weaknesses in communication between staff. Data identified a mismatch between the action SENCOs perceived teachers and TAs to be taking in relation to provision for pupils with MLD, and the action that teachers and TAs indicated occurred. The importance of information provided by TAs in relation to practice was recognised in survey and interview findings. It

could therefore be considered a concern that inter-practitioner communication demonstrated weaknesses.

12.3.2 Pedagogy

The models provided by Sen (Terzi, 2007), Evans (2007) and Norwich and Gray (2007, cited in Norwich, 2008) discussed previously, demonstrated ways in which equality of opportunity might be achieved in practice. They required the various elements of education to be balanced in order to provide pupils with equal opportunities, as opposed to treating every pupil the same. The OECD (2004) considered that this can be affected by quality of teaching. Quality of teaching is a topic that is referred to frequently in literature, in terms of, for example, class size (Blatchford *et al*, 2008) and the ability of teachers to expand their range of teaching approaches (Lewis and Norwich, 2001).

In the nursery, curriculum planning took account of the needs of all children, ensuring variety in the activities offered and the capacity for each to be used in ways that met individual needs.

In the mainstream primary, it was observed that classes were large and teachers spent little time with pupils with MLD. KS1 and KS2 pupils were observed to concentrate on their set task for a short period, after which, in the absence of

direction and alternative activities to engage them, they behaved inappropriately for periods of time.

In non-core mainstream secondary subjects, class numbers were high and teachers worked without support. In these situations, pupils with MLD were not observed to receive any more support than their peers. However, in core subjects, where class sizes were small, pupils with MLD had more interactions with teachers. In the special school, pupils at all stages were in constant groups of approximately eight pupils, ensuring substantial, continuous support.

Lewis and Norwich (2001) stated that a sign of quality in teaching was the ability of teachers to expand the range of common teaching approaches used in meeting the needs of children with SEN.

Observation findings indicated that the differentiation of materials had a significant impact on the experience of pupils with MLD. Mainstream interview findings identified that some practitioners differentiated for three bands of ability per class, some for more. Whilst it was considered to be the responsibility of teachers, TAs interviewed and observation findings indicated that they differentiated tasks as they worked, suggesting that teachers were differentiating tasks insufficiently to meet needs. Observations indicated that mainstream primary teachers differentiated to meet group abilities, as opposed to individual abilities and that as group size increased, so the differentiation of work became less appropriate.

Data indicated that withdrawal sessions were common for pupils with MLD in mainstream settings. Practitioners interviewed considered that pupils should be included fully in class, however, this was not always practical. Teachers were concerned about whether pupils should be included in every aspect of class life at a cost of perhaps not meeting their needs, or receive targeted support, to enable them to access the curriculum, but effectively excluding them from some aspects of class life. Wedell (2005) argued that withdrawal sessions may be a consequence of poor grouping in class. Practitioners could therefore resolve the dilemma with more focused grouping or consider withdrawal as a means of flexible grouping rather than as segregation (Wedell, 2005).

Streaming was utilised in the mainstream secondary for core subjects; pupils of lower ability were taught in groups of approximately twelve. There is limited evidence, with regards to the benefits of streaming children according to ability, on levels of attainment (Blatchford *et al*, 2008; Duckworth *et al*, 2009). Mainstream and special school practitioners referred to streamed groups facilitating the targeting of support, creating faster progress and improving access to the curriculum. Observations of small classes in special and mainstream settings indicated that pupils received more attention from teachers, who were able to address their individual attainments and needs, using a range of resources and teaching strategies.

Classroom behaviour issues were observed and mentioned frequently in the interview data. Research (Croll and Moses, 2000; Ainscow *et al*; 1999) showed that pupils with EBD could be the most difficult to accommodate in mainstream classes, with teachers spending between ten and fifty per cent of their time with these pupils. The negative impact of poor behaviour of others on pupils with MLD, particularly in mainstream and special KS3 classes and mainstream KS4 classes was observed; lessons were interrupted and teachers time was taken up dealing with poorly behaved pupils as opposed to working with their MLD peers.

12.3.3 Social aspects of education

School interview findings indicated that mainstream settings were considered to offer pupils a wider range of (potential) friends. Children in nursery were reported and observed to play together regardless of difference. LA, school interview and observation findings, indicated that primary pupils tended to develop friendships with peers of similar ability to themselves, a finding supported by Blatchford *et al* (2008), who identified that children mix with children of similar social class, ability and ethnicity. In mainstream secondary, pupils with MLD were observed to be on the periphery of the class, rather than integrated into it and were observed being teased, mocked and excluded by their peers.

12.3.4 School-parent partnership

The school-parent partnership was demonstrated by survey and school interview findings to be of importance to both parties. The allocation of resources was indicated to be a cause of friction, with schools trying to balance resources, whilst parents used the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001) to manipulate practice and demand more. It was evident that effective communication became more complex the larger the setting. Interview findings demonstrated that the ready availability of staff and parents in the smaller nursery and primary environments, made frequent, direct communication possible. The special and secondary settings were less conducive to effective communication. In the mainstream secondary, issues of misunderstanding, undelivered messages and inaccessible staff were mentioned in interview.

12.4 What are the views of the variety of stakeholders tasked with implementation of inclusion policy as practised at the school level?

The analysis of LA policy demonstrated that the LA supported the inclusion of children with SEN in mainstream provision. Policies stated the aims of LA activity to be to: provide a fully IE system; reduce the number of statements issued; and to develop special provision as a mainstream resource.

The tensions between the ideology and practical application of inclusion were evident in LA policy texts. From the ideological perspective, LA policy stated that it: supported the ideal of all children being educated in their local mainstream school with peers; wanted to be recognised for its equal opportunities for all approach to education; is important to improve mainstream provision to increase inclusion. However, these views were qualified in the texts by the acceptance that, in practice parents have a right to choose education for their child, placing a requirement on LAs to maintain special provision. It was considered unrealistic to expect all schools to cater for all needs and for some children mainstream education was inappropriate. In effect, although policy text stated that the LA supported a fully inclusive system, there was evidence in the texts that this was within the boundaries of practicality.

Despite seeking the support of academics and stakeholders to produce policy text that was clear, brief and set parameters, LA policy texts reflected the ambiguity identified in Government policy; references to schools making their best endeavours to provide for children with SEN and acting in the best interests of children, were open to interpretation. It was also decided to take a rights approach to social inclusion; policy text stated that children with SEN had a right to equal membership of the same groups as their peers and children without SEN, had a right to learn that children with SEN should not be treated differently. The issues raised by taking this approach to social inclusion reflect those that cause debate about inclusion in general.

LA policy text stated the aim that parents' confidence in mainstream provision was to be improved. This was to be achieved partly through demonstrating that SEN provision in mainstream and special provision was equitably funded. However, analysis of the text suggested that underlying costs of provision in special schools were higher and numbers of pupils reducing, hence special school pupils received a greater proportion of the funding. Inclusion of the MLD group in three of the LA's funding bands further complicated matters. The lack of definition of MLD meant that it was possible that pupils with similar difficulties could be funded differently. The analysis raised issues about the equity of funding for pupils with MLD, with and without statements and suggested that if MLD could not be accurately defined, it was unlikely that it would be equitably funded, either within its own group or in comparison with others.

LA participants reported that they understood the dilemma facing parents when deciding on the education for their child. Analysis suggested that LA policy implied that mainstream provision should be the preferred option, however, special provision was maintained to support parental choice. LA participants perceived that parents viewed special provision as a better choice in terms of social development, whilst mainstream was perceived to offer better academic opportunities.

Parent survey and interview findings regarding school choice showed that parents faced the reality of choosing mainstream provision with large class sizes and

limited resources, or special provision that educated their child away from mainstream society. Decisions were not based on ideals, but on realities. It has been suggested that parents choose special provision because of the failings they see in mainstream provision (Lindsay, 2003; Low, 2007). Parent interview findings showed that parents chose special provision because of their child's difficulties and fears that they would not cope in mainstream provision, which, it could be argued, indicated a failure in mainstream provision. Parents had to compromise when choosing schools; no one setting could meet all of their child's needs. Placements were not fixed once selected from the parents' perspectives. Parents would move their child in order to better meet their needs.

LA and school interview findings indicated that teachers also faced a dilemma as pupils reached Years 5/6; a lack of trust that secondary education could provide adequately for pupils with MLD, caused teachers to feel the need to protect them by obtaining statements.

LA participants recognised the dilemmas of inclusion at the level of practice, accurately identifying pupils with MLD and providing effective interventions; meeting the needs of pupils with MLD, whilst also achieving Government targets. LA participants observed that MLD pupils challenged teachers; pupils at either end of the spectrum of needs were provided for, however, those with MLD who did not warrant a statement, but required greater support than was usual, created uncertainty. LA interview findings suggested that MLD was beset by a cycle of

poor, or absent identification of needs, a lack of knowledge and understanding of the issues, which inhibited the development of successful interventions.

LA participants reported that the quality of teaching and learning was of key significance to the success of inclusion and indicated a need to develop SEN skills sets. As such, they provided training for practitioners although a reluctance to attend was noted. LA policy identified required outcomes for training. These were unlikely to give an indication as to the quality of training, whether it was accurately focused on training needs, or whether it was effective in addressing needs. LA findings made reference to favourable responses to training, however, this level of evaluation indicates attendees' response to the course and not whether training met needs in terms of pupil outcomes. As with schools, it appeared that the LA lacked detailed evaluation of training.

LA policy also specified outcome measures to be used to evaluate activity towards inclusion. An Audit Commission report for the LA (cited in LA[a], 2007) identified the need for the LA to focus measurement of practice on individual programmes that would facilitate the identification of links between provision, costs and change in performance. If defined and standardised, such measures would facilitate cross-school comparisons and could help to identify effective provision for pupils with MLD.

12.5 What are the views of MLD pupils of inclusion policy as experienced by them?

Pupil interview findings indicated contentment with current education placements. In terms of the forthcoming transition of two pupils, concerns centred on the social aspects of transition, rather than around the academic aspects of transition and their ability to perform at the next stage.

Interview findings showed that social relationships were important to all pupils, particularly relationships with teachers. They needed to feel that they could trust them. In terms of quality of teaching and effective learning, pupils wanted to be understood and to understand. They valued sound explanations and opportunities to discuss topics in order to better understand. This supported research that suggested that effective Year 2 teachers spent time with pupils, encouraging problem-solving, discussion and linking learning with their own experiences and understanding (Rix *et al*, 2009; Sheehy *et al*, 2009).

Fun was mentioned several times by pupils in relation to lessons. It was associated with pupil understanding and the standard of teaching, rather than the subject. In both mainstream and special settings, pupils indicated that their confidence in their own abilities was greater in lessons that they enjoyed. The KS2 mainstream pupil referred to withdrawal sessions with the SENCO as fun, possibly implying that the session met the criteria identified above. Ofsted (2006)

found that effective teachers demonstrated an ability to make their lessons innovative and exciting for pupils.

Pupils also identified a need for individual support. Observations indicated that in mainstream primary provision, support came from the TA in KS1 and the SENCO in KS2. Neither was available to the pupils on a full-time basis. The KS1 pupil was observed to rely heavily on the TA for direction.

The pupil findings demonstrated that as a group, pupils recognised their own strengths and limitations. Understanding, literacy, discussion and memory were identified as areas of difficulty. Norwich and Kelly (2004) identified that pupils perceived literacy to be the hardest subject to learn, however, their data indicated that numeracy was considered to be the second hardest subject to learn. For this research, pupil data indicated that maths was enjoyed by all participants.

Girls in the mainstream secondary approached their difficulties in different ways; the KS3 pupil was confident and would speak out if she was unsure; the KS4 pupil did not want to draw attention to herself. The former identified her strengths as her willingness to work hard and desire to learn.

Friendship was important for the pupils. The mainstream KS2 pupil reported that he enjoyed school because of his friends. In mainstream settings, friends were considered to look out for each other, play together and share conversations. The

mainstream KS3 pupil perceived herself to have many friends, however, observation and her parent did not support this perception. The KS4 pupil reported that peer behaviour towards her could spoil her day.

In the special school, friendships were affected by gender rather than learning difficulties. Pupils were socially included and no teasing or mocking was observed. However, a predominance of boys in classes did affect the girls, particularly in KS4, where there was just one girl in a class of eight.

12.6 Review of the research design

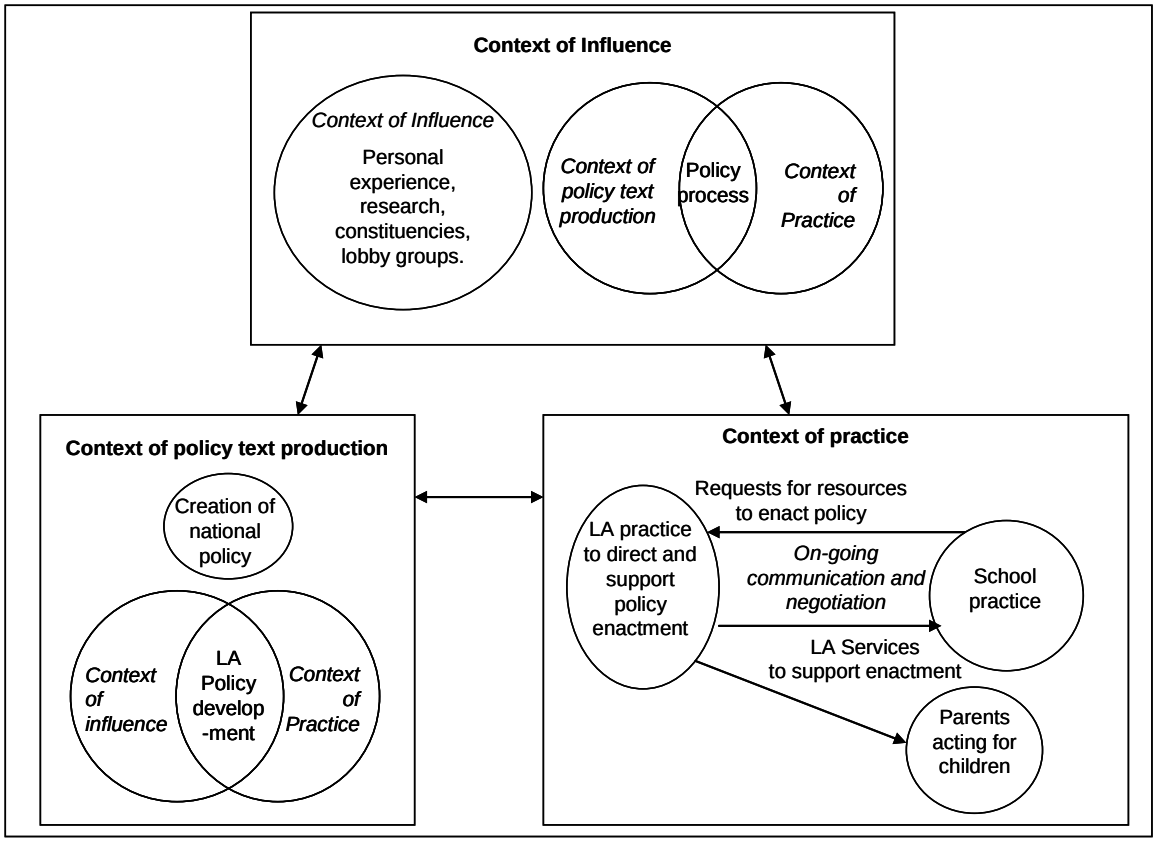
12.6.1 The policy cycle as a tool for analysis

The research design was framed within the Bowe *et al* (1992) model of the continuous policy cycle.

Placing the policy-to-practice context of SEN within the framework of the contexts of influence, policy text production and practice, ensured a thorough representation of the study area (Edwards, 2001) and addressed the criticism of interpretive research that it fails to address the wider social context (Cohen *et al*, 2000). It also ensured that each element within the policy-to-practice context received equal consideration.

Ball (Mainardes and Marcondes, 2009) suggested that the contexts "nested" into each other. The findings supported this view. As the process of analysing the data progressed it was confirmed that the boundaries between the contexts overlapped and that within each context there existed aspects of the others. Figure 12.1 shows the policy cycle with the findings of each chapter transposed on to the relevant context. These are discussed below.

Figure 12.1 Findings from the data transposed on to the Bowe *et al* (1992) model of the policy cycle.



Hansard texts provided an understanding of the process that must be followed in creating policy: several Readings in the HC and HL and Committee Stages enabled agreement of clauses. This demonstrated that within the context of influence there existed contexts of practice and of policy text production, each relating to that policy creation process. Hansard findings also demonstrated that MPs were influenced by personal experience and by constituency matters, for example; influences that were personal to them. Therefore within the context of influence, there were nested contexts of influence relating specifically to individual MPs. Once the policy creation process had been completed, policy text was produced for publication. This occurred within the context of policy text production.

At the LA level, two separate actions took place: firstly, LA policy-makers created a policy framework for practice in the Borough. It has been noted that the creation of policy by LAs, can be influenced by local history and experience. Therefore, within the context of policy text production, the creation of local policy involves both influence and process (practice).

Secondly, action is taken at the LA level to enact policy. This sits within the context of practice. Whilst the practice impacts on schools, LA and schools remain separate entities, with a flow of, for example, services, funding and communication between them. Also within the context of practice are found

parents, who act to support their children. They too interact with the LA whilst remaining separate entities.

Findings demonstrated the complexity of moving from written text to practical action and suggested that there was a negotiation between the parties in relation to the enactment of policy: the LA requires schools to support inclusive practice, through such initiatives as multi-agency working and training, relying on their goodwill for support. Schools requiring funds and resources to support their improvement in practice. Policy is not therefore delegated, it is a process of communication and negotiation. This is shown in the policy of context.

The evidence suggests that the context of SEN provision is changing continually, with movement occurring between and within the different contexts, hence the policy cycle. One aspect of the cycle that is unclear is where responsibility lies for addressing policy issues and identifying solutions. In a top-down model it could be assumed that responsibility lies with policy-makers. In a cycle, this may not be the case. An example that was highlighted in the findings was the issue of training. Findings from all data sets identified weaknesses in training processes at local and LA levels. Hansard evidence indicated that lack of training and inadequately skilled staff were frequent topics of debate, and lack of responsiveness to the need for relatively minor change in practice was noted in respect of training, in this case between policy influence and text, recognised from the time of the Warnock Report (HC Debs. Vol.365, col.242, 270). If responsibility

for practitioner training is not identified and articulated at the level of policy influence, there is a risk that it will not find its way into revised guidance; hence the continuing cycle of poor training and lack of improved practice. It emphasises the need for consultation and feedback from the context of practice.

Through the combination of Bowe *et al's* (1992) analytical framework and the research findings, the context of SEN has been shown to be interconnected and complex, explaining why it has proved so difficult to make any changes to the system of SEN provision since Warnock (DES, 1978).

12.6.2 Validity, reliability and trustworthiness

Chapter 3: 3.6 described the mixed methods of data collection to be employed in this interpretive study, to ensure its validity, reliability and trustworthiness, throughout the process of data collection, analysis and reporting.

Trustworthiness was supported by the prolonged engagement of the researcher in the field, enabling relationships to develop and to gain an understanding of the school context of SEN. There is a risk of bias caused by too long in the field, however, this was addressed through peer debriefing. Persistent observation in each setting, enabled common and discrepant aspects of practice to be identified.

Data were collected through document analysis, survey, interview and observation, providing opportunity for methodological and data triangulation. In addition, quantitative data analysis prepared for the LA (Aubrey *et al*, 2008), provided an indication of broader LA trends and a framework within which to nest the predominantly qualitative focus of this study.

Peer debriefing with the LA PEP and Professor Aubrey, who conducted the scoping study (Aubrey *et al*, 2005), was a regular feature of the research process. This process was not intended as a means of changing the outcomes of the research, but to encourage reflection and consideration of methods and processes at each stage.

A framework was devised for analysis using the research questions as a guide. Data were examined and allocated to appropriate a priori categories, which were further sub-divided into common emergent themes. The use of this framework ensured that data were treated consistently, reducing the possibility of bias. Once the initial questions had been addressed, the data were examined further, to identify any emergent themes that would not have been identified from initial analysis.

A final example of the importance given to validity, reliability and trustworthiness, is demonstrated in the opportunity taken for peer-review. The findings were presented at international conferences: European Association for Research on

Learning and Instruction (EARLI) Conference, Budapest, 2007 (Aubrey, Godfrey, Madigan and Cook, 2007); Symposium for International School Psychology Association (ISPA) Conference, Utrecht, 2008 (Aubrey *et al,* 2008). Attendees had opportunities to raise questions or seek clarification regarding the research process.

12.6.3 Limitations of the research

The mainstream secondary was an all-girls' school and as such, may have affected the evidence. As the study progressed there were issues of timing in obtaining parental consent for observations as discussed in chapter 11. This limited the observation data available for analysis for special school KS3.

The research could be criticised for its qualitative focus. One reason for lack of quantitative data is the difficulty of obtaining sufficiently robust and homogeneous samples in SEN groups, particularly MLD groups. The study was not sufficiently large to enable findings to be generalised to a wider context, however, the study was conducted specifically to illuminate LA practice.

Interpretive research requires the researcher to bring together participants' interpretations of social reality. People are not an homogenous group and all bring different meanings of the same phenomenon to the research. Hence the strength of interpretive research lies in the richness of data obtained from the

process. However, this strength is also a weakness of interpretive research. The likelihood of replicating the data is limited for the reason that people are not homogenous, they change and so a response to a question one day, is likely to be different the next. This renders the data less reliable. Data collection methods were selected to address this issue to some degree. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to add to the validity of the data and transcripts were provided to interviewees for checking; survey was used which was designed with reliability in mind and observations added to the data sets, facilitating both data and method triangulation.

12.7 Implications for practice

12.7.1 The Policy cycle as a tool

Using the model (Bowe *et al*, 1992) as a tool for analysing the SEN policy process revealed gaps in the policy cycle for addressing issues. Hansard evidence revealed the extent to which minor amendments to existing policy failed to address fundamental issues. It would be beneficial when developing policy to include in the process a means for addressing issues and identifying solutions. Thereby ensuring that issues that occur do not continue to rotate through the cycle.

12.7.2 Defining MLD

The focus of this study was to identify current practice for pupils with MLD. Defining MLD was an issue and it was agreed to use the PLASC definition (DfES, 2005) to identify participants. However, one aspect of the research was to ascertain how participants defined the group. Responses demonstrated the range of type and severity of need that was incorporated. Parents completing the survey reported having children with autism, dyslexia and epilepsy in addition to those whose children had a variety of learning difficulties.

The primary school survey findings suggested that there may be some relationship between job role and definition provided. The school interview findings did not follow this pattern, however, this may be because the primary data reflected sets of job roles in primary settings. The interview data provided the view of one job role holder in each of four settings that focused on special and mainstream pupils across all KSs. It is unlikely that patterns would be evident from this source. If different aspects of MLD are identified by different job roles, combining the views of the different job roles may provide a more holistic view of the features that make up MLD. Further research involving a larger target audience may confirm whether there are relationships between job role and features of MLD identified.

Defining MLD with greater clarity, would have the benefits of identifying effective provision and facilitating the more accurate targeting of resources. As discussed in Chapter 5 funding for MLD crosses high and low incidence needs and within low incidence needs, MLD crosses three bands of funding. It is unlikely that in this situation, the LA could claim with any certainty that funding is equitably allocated in respect of children with MLD.

Another approach to defining MLD may be to clarify who is not included in the group. Both survey and interview findings identified EBD, medical and language and communication difficulties as features of MLD. These have their own identified interventions and could therefore stand alone as groups, as opposed to coming under the umbrella term of MLD. By combining this approach with the job role focus discussed above, it may be possible to achieve greater clarity with regard to who is included.

Warnock was keen to move away from the categorisation of difficulties; a view supported by Government in the *Education Act* (DES, 1981). However, practice has demonstrated that some form of grouping is necessary to direct interventions and identify appropriate pedagogical activity. Not to group because of inclusive ideologies, is perhaps to do children with MLD a disservice.

12.7.3 Inclusion

Inclusion is a contested concept that is of particular relevance to pupils with MLD. As discussed the difficulties encountered within the group are so diverse that the pupils may be found in mainstream and special provision. Special, mainstream and LA participants were in agreement that pupils with MLD could manage in the mainstream, providing there were no complicating factors. As a result of national policy, pupils with MLD have been moving from special provision into mainstream, resulting in special school populations having more severe needs.

For those pupils in mainstream provision, the findings provided a picture of diversity of practice. School leaders were key in creating direction and providing the organisational structures and resources, to drive through an inclusive environment. The term 'drive through' is used deliberately to imply the effort needed to achieve a vision of practice. To do so, requires that staff hold (or come to hold) the same vision and understanding of inclusive practice, thereby achieving an whole school approach to provision for pupils with MLD. Three head teachers were particularly experienced SEN practitioners (section 8.3.1) and led the schools where inclusive practice was most developed.

The lack of definition of inclusion is an issue where school leaders are less familiar with the SEN context. In these scenarios, outcomes of policy enactment vary. Schools may respond by implementing the policy in full, changing their

practice accordingly; adapting it to fit with existing practice, or absorbing it into existing practice without making any changes (Saunders, 1985 cited in Bowe *et al*, 1992).

The mainstream secondary benefitted from a department for SEN that focused entirely on provision for pupils with SEN. Data indicated a creativity in approach to enable them to achieve the most effective provision as efficiently as possible. However, across the school as a whole, findings indicated that support for pupils with MLD varied. Observations provided examples of the medical and social models of disability in practice, and one example of an interactive approach.

Although considered to be segregated provision, the special school demonstrated an interactive model of disability in action. Classroom practice was observed to take account of individual, academic and social needs, meeting all of the individual needs of their pupils.

Thinking about provision for pupils with MLD from the broader perspective of the interactive model of disability, supports an inclusive approach to education (Farrell, 2005). This suggests that in addition to inclusive settings, there are pockets of inclusive practice within settings that may not have chosen or, as yet achieved, an whole school inclusive focus. This in turn suggests that, for some teachers, inclusive practice is a choice rather than a policy directive.

The evidence indicated the need for a definition of inclusion and of inclusive practice, to be articulated, in order that all schools can identify and plan for improved provision for all pupils.

The research also demonstrated the importance of knowledgeable and skilled staff in meeting the needs of pupils with MLD through inclusive practice. Data showed that inclusive practice benefitted all pupils, not only those with MLD. In the current context, sound processes for effective CPD, would support whole school activity and also support those teachers who have chosen to teach inclusively, in less inclusive settings. Perhaps this could be described as a bottom-up approach to policy enactment.

The evidence has shown that schools can be led by visionaries to improved performance, or teachers with vision can push forward practice individually. It has been shown that segregated or mainstream provision can demonstrate inclusive practice. The location of education is of less significance than the quality of the teaching. This finding supports the view of Jacqui Smith (HC Debs. Vol.435, col.829) and a Policy Exchange Report which amongst other things, called for inclusion to be defined and stated that inclusion is about quality of education rather than location (Hartley, 2010).

12.7.4 Future legislation

Hansard texts provided a wealth of information regarding the changing context of SEN and the tensions and dilemmas that have repeatedly tested MPs over time. In addition, they demonstrated how special needs and mainstream education came to be so entwined, that any change in one, causes ripples in the other. In combination with the empirical data and literature, Hansard texts provided an understanding of the policy-to-practice context that could not have been achieved from a single elite interview.

This understanding of the subject context, combined with an understanding of the policy process context, provide an insight into the dilemmas of trying to address issues in current policy. The SEN Green Paper due imminently may focus on: parental choice, transforming funding, prevent the unnecessary closure of special schools and improving diagnosis and assessment.

If policy is to be successfully enacted, it must take account of all the effects that it will have on the SEN context prior to being published. For example, if the Government wants to change parents' rights, there are many other elements of SEN that will overlap and therefore be affected by any change. Initially parents' rights will touch on statements since without a statement, parents have no choice of provision. The issue of statements leads to a consideration of LA budgets and the need to provide equitably for all children; a role that is inhibited by the

inequities inherent in the current system, that is, legislation that favours pupils with statements. In trying to achieve an equitable outcome, consideration moves to classroom practice.

Discussion has demonstrated the complexity of changing the system and suggests why it has changed so little since 1981, despite many reviews of practice. The context of SEN is dynamic and change must be made within the changing context. At the bottom of many changes lie improved practice. Perhaps, this would be the point at which Lindsey's (2003) advice should be taken: to stop looking at inputs and settings and start focusing on experiences and outcomes. This may be achieved through improved practice rather than for example, statements.

Again discussion returns to improving the quality of teaching and learning. This is one of the elements within the context of SEN, that appears to be in a perpetual cycle with no apparent change, whilst other elements of the system are continually tinkered with. Perhaps if, as suggested above, at some point in the policy cycle the situation was recognised and effectively addressed, the other issues might resolve themselves.

12.7.5 Implications for LA practice

The study suggests that attention could be focused in the following directions to further support the education of pupils with MLD:

- Conducted efficiently, the cycle of training needs identification, appropriate CPD, dissemination and evaluation of practice, provides a knowledgeable and skilled workforce in a cost effective and time efficient manner. CPD incorporates a wide range of developmental activity, of which sharing best practice would be one of the most useful.
- Findings showed that pupil engagement increased where: a variety of teaching methods was used; a range of appropriately differentiated activities was available to meet individual rather than group needs; activities were available to engage primary pupils between more formal tasks. It was noted that long periods of carpet time could result in primary pupils becoming off-task.
- Thorough coordination and planning between teachers and TAs was indicated to be essential. In particular, a team approach to the provision of SEN was seen to offer benefits in terms of pupils' experiences.
- Consideration might be given to placing pupils with MLD in classes according to strengths and weaknesses of particular children, as opposed to their test results. As observed by one head teacher:

> …the thought of being a hugely bright dyslexic stuck with children who don't understand is horrendous…For something inside you to be screaming 'I understand this I just can't write it down for you but actually I understand this hugely'.

- Communication within and external to schools has been shown to be key to relationships with parents and to practice in schools. Giving attention to communication within schools, particularly large and complex settings, may improve outcomes for practitioners, in terms of knowing their pupils, for parents in being involved in their child's education and for pupils, in understanding their environment.

12.8 Conclusion

This chapter has drawn together all of the findings in order to address the research questions, which it has done in the context of LA SEN policy-to-practice. It has emphasised the many tensions and dilemmas that are reflected at all levels in the SEN education system and shown that local policies reflect the same issues of ambiguity of terminology and lack of specific direction that afflict national policy text. The challenges facing all those involved in taking national policy, interpreting it and enacting it locally have been discussed.

This research findings have identified aspects of provision that can be addressed with the aim of improving the experience of pupils with MLD. It is important for these pupils that the LA for whom this research was conducted, consider these implications and implement the relevant changes.

Appendix A

Survey questionnaires

Abbreviated questionnaire for the role of SENCO

Educational Provision for Children with Moderate Learning Difficulties: Policy to Practice in One LA

Section 1: Background information

Including questions covering:
- gender
- experience
- characteristic of MLD
- numbers of pupils with MLD
- key features of IE

Section 2: Preparation for teaching children with MLD

Including questions covering:
- training and development relating specifically to MLD
- preparation for teaching a child with MLD
- differentiation
- opinions re support for teachers.

Section 3: Support in the classroom and during non-teaching time

Including questions covering:
- classroom support for teachers in teaching children with MLD
- support for pupils outside the classroom
- activity to support children with MLD during non-teaching time
- amount of teacher time taken up by children with MLD
- where SENCOs go for support and opinion about that support

Section 4: Pupil Involvement

Including questions covering:

- inclusion of children in meetings and their role in these
- targets: children's understanding of targets and their progress
- involvement in whole school issues.

Section 5: School-Parent Partnership

Including questions covering:

- quality of the parent partnership and its impact on education provision
- their perception of the importance given to the partnership by parents
- frequency of communication and effective means of communication
- barriers to communication and ability to be flexible to meet parents' needs
- involving parents and school perception of parents' views of school.

Section 6: Other factors impacting on a child's education

Including questions covering:

- thoughts about external services
- views about the physical environment and impact on children with MLD
- integration of children with MLD and their peers in structured and social situations
- peer support.

Section 7: Your thoughts about inclusion

Including questions covering:

- IE and whether anyone suffers/benefits.
- other comments.

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

Abbreviated questionnaire for parents

Educational Provision for Children with Moderate Learning Difficulties: Policy to Practice in One LA

Section 1: Background information

Including questions covering:

- the child's gender, age, school year
- features of the child's difficulties
- school choice and reasons
- meaning of IE to them.

Section 2: In the classroom

Including questions covering:

- whether their child has a statement and their experience of obtaining this
- location of their child's learning in terms of in/outside the classroom, individually or in groups and their preference in this respect
- who teaches/is involved in their child's learning during the day
- their opinion of the education their child receives in relation to academic, vocational and social development
- whether they believe their child's teacher fully understands their child's needs
- whether the teacher understands their (the parents') expectations of school
- whether they believe teachers' expectations of their child's potential are realistic.
- views about support received by external services
- views about advantages/disadvantages of the school environment for their child
- how they feel about their child's social involvement and integration with peers.

Section 3: School-Parent partnership

Including questions covering:

- whether the quality of the school-parent partnership affects their child's education
- the importance they give to the school-parent partnership
- how often the school communicates with them and what they feel is the most effective means of communication
- any barriers they have encountered to communication with the school
- whether the school is able to be flexible with them regarding meetings

- how the school involves them in their child's education
- whether they are consulted on whole school issues as well as those relating solely to their child.

Section 4: Your thoughts about inclusion

Including questions covering:

- IE and whether anyone suffers/benefits from it
- any other issues they wish to raise.

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

Appendix B

Interview schedules for LA participants.

The tables below indicate the questions asked of LA participants. Roles are abbreviated in the tables as follows: Principal Educational Psychologist (A); Head of the Inclusion Advisory Service (B); Principal Special Education Officer (C); two advisory staff (D), and two educational psychologists (E).

Inclusion

A	B	C	D	E	Questions
✓		✓		✓	Who do you think benefits from inclusion? Does anyone suffer?
✓	✓	✓		✓	I've read the inclusion policy and the reference to a classroom for all, but what does an 'inclusive education' actually mean in the classroom? (What would we see) And how would you define *successful* inclusion? (How would you define an inclusive education? Do you think it's achievable?)
✓	✓	✓			There's a reference in the policy to those with SEN not being treated differently but in order for children with SEN to achieve they need additional support so they must be treated differently mustn't they?
✓	✓	✓			Are there any barriers to inclusion?
				✓	What barriers (if any) do you encounter when you're trying to make changes or implement solutions?
✓	✓	✓			There are still places available in special schools for children whose parents feel they need this provision. With the emphasis on mainstream provision, how is the decision made as to whether a child should attend mainstream or special schools?

Parental rights

A	B	C	D	E	Questions
				✓	Do you feel parents' involvement in their child's education is important? How are you able to support them and meet their needs?
✓	✓	✓			What role does the service play in encouraging parents' involvement in their child's education? How do you encourage reluctant parents to become engaged with the service?

LA policy and SEN resources

A	B	C	D	E	Questions
			✓		Could you explain the support that your department provides to schools (primary & secondary) to support specifically those children with learning and cognition difficulties.
			✓	✓	What do you think is being done well both in your own service, within CEA and in schools to support learning? What could be improved?
			✓	✓	Multi-agency working and collaboration are very important. Have you seen benefits for all involved or are there issues to overcome? (How well do you think these outside agencies work with Education and vice versa?)
			✓		What value do you think outside agencies add to a child's learning?
	✓				The Inclusion Advisory Service provides support from a number of perspectives and also sits within the school improvement strategy. Does this ever create conflicts for schools in trying to implement different strategies at the same time?
	✓		✓		What processes do your teams go through to implement government policies and legislation within schools? (How do you go about implementing government policies?)
	✓				I understand that the teams within the Service are advisory and so work more with staff than directly with children. Does this also apply to the SLTs within the service as presumably they still come under Health? Why did you decide on this structure?

continued

A	B	C	D	E	Questions
	✓				How do schools and hence the children benefit from the joint working between the SLTs and Advisory teachers in the Language and Communication team?
✓	✓	✓			One of the functions of the LEA is to ensure that children benefit from co-ordinated provision. Do you feel that you have achieved a co-ordinated provision at this stage? What benefits have you seen for the children?
✓	✓	✓			Is providing central services a better use of SEN funding than passing it on to schools to allocate for their pupils?
✓	✓	✓			How do you use the schools data to review your service provision in respect of children with MLD?

Pedagogy

A	B	C	D	E	Questions
				✓	How well do the children cope with transition between schools? What support do they receive to help them?
✓	✓	✓			What issues arise when children transfer between schools a) for staff and b) for the children? How do the (Inclusion teams) support children and staff in this respect?
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	What do you think an ideal learning environment would look like for the children with learning and cognition difficulties? Who would be a part of this environment? Over time is this achievable?
			✓		How do they need the classroom to function in order for them to learn?
			✓		What should the physical layout be?
				✓	How well do you feel the differentiation of the curriculum is managed for these children?
				✓	Do you find that children are usually involved in setting and reviewing targets?
			✓		How should their day/lessons be structured in order for them to get the most benefit from it?
			✓		What support do they need in order for their learning experience to be effective?
✓	✓	✓			What do you think is being done well for these children at all levels? What could be improved?

Training and support

A	B	C	D	E	Questions
	✓				The inclusion project offers a lot of training for school staff. How are school training needs identified and what level of evaluation takes place?
	✓				Do you provide training to school leaders in the identification of training needs and the evaluation of training?
✓	✓	✓		✓	What kind of support do teachers ask for in relation to teaching children with learning and cognition difficulties?
✓	✓	✓		✓	I read about SENCO meetings, sharing best practice and an inclusion newsletters. What other support is provided to SENCOs and Inclusion Managers in their role? Are there induction programmes for these roles?
✓		✓			Do you think TAs are well enough equipped to provide the kind of support children with learning and cognition difficulties need?
	✓				Do TAs receive induction training and what element of this would cover SEN? What further training is available to them specifically focusing on SEN?

Social model of disability

A	B	C	D	E	Questions
✓		✓			What issues do you feel these children face in the classroom?
✓		✓			What solutions do you think there are to these issues?
				✓	I've read your service booklet and understand that you use consultation methods to solve problems. Thinking about those children who are the focus for this study, what kinds of issues do they encounter in the classroom that impact upon their ability to learn?
				✓	What kinds of solutions are you able to implement?
✓		✓			People have mentioned behavioural issues as a difficulty. In secondary school is there any solution to having numbers of pupils with behavioural difficulties in the same class given that they're streamed in KS4?

Appendix C

Interview schedules for school participants

The following tables identify the questions asked of participants during school interviews. The following abbreviations are used to indicate which participants were asked which questions: head teacher/deputy head teacher (H/T); SENCO/inclusion manager (S); teacher (T); TA.

Inclusion

H/T	S	T	TA	Questions
✓	✓	✓	✓	How long have you been a (job role)? What age range do you teach?
✓	✓	✓	✓	What do you think are the key features of an inclusive education? (What does an inclusive education mean to you?)
✓				Are there any barriers to that kind of inclusion?
✓	✓	✓	✓	Who do you think benefits from inclusive policy and why?
✓	✓	✓	✓	Who do you think suffers from inclusive policy and why?
	✓			Are there any barriers to your work

MLD

H/T	S	T	TA	Questions
✓	✓	✓	✓	Thinking of children in your (setting) categorised as having MLD, what are the main features of these children's learning difficulties?
		✓		In a typical class you teach, what proportion of children has MLD?
✓	✓	✓		Have there been any significant changes in the proportion of children with MLD in the (setting) over the last few years? If so, what?
✓				How do you define progress for children with MLD/ Does the school have an agreed definition of what constitutes progress for children with MLD?

Parent partnership

H/T	S	T	TA	Questions
✓	✓	✓	✓	How important do you think the (setting)/parent partnership is and why? (Do you think your relationship with the school has an impact on your child's education? How?)
✓	✓	✓	✓	How do you develop this relationship and involve parents in their child's education?
✓				What direct communication do you have with the parents of children with MLD?
✓	✓	✓		Are their any barriers to communicating with parents? Examples. How do you deal with these?
				How often and by what means do staff communicate with you about your child?
✓	✓	✓		How do you accommodate the needs of parents? (Is the school willing to be flexible and respond to your needs? How do they do this?)
✓	✓	✓	✓	Do you think parents are happy with the education their children receive or do you think they have any issues? (What is your opinion of the education your child receives in terms of their academic and vocational achievement?)

SEN resources, external services

H/T	S	T	TA	Questions
✓				How is the SEN budget allocated within the (setting)? How do you decide the priorities?
✓				Are there any resourcing issues that affect how children with MLD are taught in the (setting), e.g. staff numbers, training, availability of advice, specialist teachers?
✓				How could these issues be addressed?
✓	✓	✓	✓	What are your views about the professional support received from outside the school?
✓	✓	✓		How well do you think the school and these external providers collaborate for the benefit of the children?

Recruitment and training

H/T	S	T	TA	Questions
✓				When recruiting staff, what qualifications, experience and training do you look for specifically in relation to teaching/supporting children with SEN?
✓				Are there any barriers to recruiting teachers and TAs experienced in working with children with SEN?
			✓	When you became an LSA/TA what qualifications did you have for the role?
✓				How do you identify staff training needs in relation to SEN?
✓				What training and development opportunities are made available to staff re SEN?
✓				Do staff make use of these opportunities for training? (Teachers, TAs, SENCO)
✓				How is training disseminated amongst staff?
✓				How is the impact of training assessed? How do you measure whether a training course has met the needs identified for an individual member of staff?
	✓	✓	✓	Have you received any specific training and development in relation to teaching (supporting) children with MLD? What and who provided the training?
	✓			Where do you go for support and advice in your role? What do you think about the support that you receive?
	✓			What do you think about induction for SENCOs/inclusion managers?
	✓			What do you think about the networking opportunities available?
	✓	✓	✓	What do you think about the support available to teachers (TAs) with regards to teaching children with MLD?
		✓		What forms of support do you have in the classroom when teaching a child with MLD?
			✓	Is there any other preparation you would find helpful for working with children with MLD?

Pedagogy

H/T	S	T	TA	Questions
✓				How do you use (setting) data to inform future teaching practice specifically in relation to SEN?
✓				What action is taken to support low attaining pupils i.e. those in the bottom 25% at each Key Stage?
✓ nursery				How do you support children with SEN in their transfer to primary? Would you like to see any changes in that process?
✓ nursery				Do you have any views about the education these children receive once they leave you?
	✓	✓	✓	What preparation do teachers/TAs undertake when preparing to have a child with MLD in their class?
	✓			Ideally what preparation do you think should take place to facilitate the transfer of children with MLD in to the school/between years and to ensure they have equal opportunities from the outset?
	✓	✓		How do teachers manage the range of abilities they have in their classes? How do they provide for individual needs?
		✓	✓	What activities are you involved in during non-teaching time in relation to children with MLD? How much of your time does this take up?
	✓			What support do children with MLD generally receive in the classroom and from whom?
	✓	✓		Are children ever withdrawn from lessons for small group/individual work? What would these sessions cover?
	✓	✓	✓	What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of withdrawing children from class for these sessions?
			✓	Do you teach any sessions outside the class that include children with MLD? What would these be?
			✓	What benefits are evident from the children taking part in these sessions?
		✓		Is there anything more that could be done during teaching or non-teaching time to support children with MLD?
	✓	✓	✓	What do you feel the school does well for children with MLD?
	✓	✓	✓	What do you think could be done better? What would need to change for this to happen?

continued

H/T	S	T	TA	Questions
	✓	✓		How are the children involved in their transfer between schools/year groups?
	✓	✓		How are children involved in the planning of their education and how do they know what is expected of them?
	✓	✓	✓	Thinking about the physical environment of the school (classroom), what steps do you take to adapt the environment to the needs of children with MLD?

Appendix D

Parent interview schedule

1. What has been your experience of the education system for (name) so far?
2. When did it become apparent that your child was experiencing difficulties?
3. Did the school suggest any action to you when the difficulty was recognised?
4. Why did you choose this school for your child?
5. A lot of reference is made to inclusion. What does an inclusive education mean to you?
6. Does your child have a statement of SEN? (If yes) What was your experience of obtaining that statement?
7. Does your child stay in the classroom for all of his/her lessons or does he/she have any sessions in small groups or individually? (If yes to groups/individual sessions) What do these sessions cover?
8. Do you prefer your child to learn in the classroom with his/her peers, or in groups/individually outside the classroom, or a mix of both? Why?
9. Who teaches and supports your child in the classroom, in addition to their teacher?
10. Does your child have any professional support from outside school? What do you think of the professional support received from outside the school?
11. What is your opinion of the education your child receives in terms of their academic and vocational achievement?
12. Do you think the school supports their social development? How is this done?
13. Do you think your child has integrated easily with his/her peers or has he/she had any difficulties?
14. (If had difficulties) How were his/her difficulties addressed by the school?
15. Do you think your child's teacher fully understands your child's needs?

continued

16. Does the teacher understand what you expect from the school? Do you and the teacher share the same expectations of what your child can achieve?
17. Do you think your relationship with the school has an impact on your child's education? How?
18. How often and by what means do staff communicate with you about your child?
19. Have you encountered any barriers to communicating with the school? Examples?
20. Is the school willing to be flexible and respond to your needs? How do they do this?
21. In what ways does the school involve you in your child's education?
22. Who do you think benefits from inclusive policy and why?
23. Who do you think suffers from inclusive policy and why?
24. Is there anything I haven't asked you about that you feel is important in relation to the education of your child?

Appendix E

Pupil interview schedule

1. I've enjoyed spending time in your classroom and seeing what you do. Do you like being at this school? Did you help to choose it?
2. What is good about the school?
3. What do you think could be better?
4. Do you have a favourite teacher? What is special about them/why do you like them best?
5. Can you think of a teacher who is not so good? What makes them not so good?
6. *(If they have sessions outside the class)* Sometimes you have lessons away from the rest of the class – when you go out of the classroom. What do you think about those lessons?
7. Who helps you with your work in the classroom? What do you think about (any named professionals from outside school)? Do they help you? Do you see them very often?
8. Do you get enough help in the classroom or would you like more? (Why like more?)
9. Think of a really good lesson – what made it so good?
10. Think of a lesson that wasn't so good? Why didn't you like it?
11. Are there any things in the classroom that make it hard for you to do your work?
12. What do you like to do at break/playtimes.
13. What are the best times during your school day? Why?

Appendix F

Observations: narrative sheet

Time	Context	Spoken activity			Activity
		From	To		

Appendix G
Observation of pupils and teachers in classroom – time sample

School ref: Year group:
Child ref: Age:
Time started: Time finished:
Nature of lesson: Date:

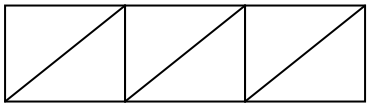
Section A (odd date start with section A)

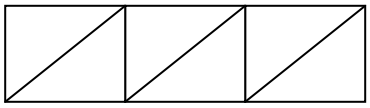
Positive responses										Negative responses									
Academic					Social					Academic					Social				
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	6	7	8	9	10	6	7	8	9	10	6	7	8	9	10
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	6	7	8	9	10	6	7	8	9	10	6	7	8	9	10
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	6	7	8	9	10	6	7	8	9	10	6	7	8	9	10
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	6	7	8	9	10	6	7	8	9	10	6	7	8	9	10
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	6	7	8	9	10	6	7	8	9	10	6	7	8	9	10

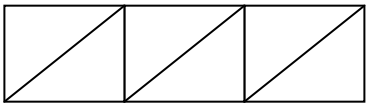
Totals (REX)

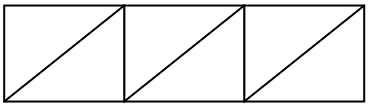
( )	( )	( )	( )

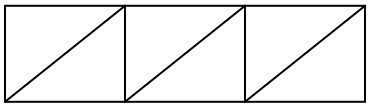
Section B

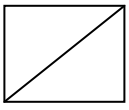
1 

2 

3 

4 

5 

total 

Appendix H

Sample parent letter: information and consent

Parent address Date

Dear

Research: Education Provision for Children with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD): Policy to Practice in one LA

I am a PhD student at (name) University and am working with the (LA) to examine the current education provision for children with moderate learning difficulties (MLD) within the Borough. The findings from this research will inform future decisions made within the Borough about how to best meet the needs of children with MLD.

The purpose of this letter is to ask whether you would be agreeable to (child) being involved in this research. In order to collect the information needed I would observe (child) in school over a two day period and talk to her/him about her/his experiences of school. To make the recording of the information easier, a tape recorder would be used. (Child) would be asked if she/he was happy for me to observe his/her school day and talk to her/him about school. If she/he indicated in any way that she/he did not want to do this the study would cease and any information provided to that point would not be used.

If at all possible I would also be very grateful for an interview with you to obtain your thoughts about (child's) education. This could take place in school or by telephone as you prefer.

The information provided would be kept confidential, seen only by me and my supervisors at the (LA) and (name) University. When the final research report is produced, any information reported will remain anonymous.

In order to carry out this research I need your consent to observe and talk to (child). I therefore attach a consent slip and if you are agreeable would be very grateful if you would sign this and return it to school by (date).

Should you have any queries about this research, please contact me.

I look forward to hearing from you and thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely

Sue Madigan

I have read the information given above. I have been given the chance to ask questions and all of my questions (if any) have been answered satisfactorily. I hereby give permission for (name) to observe and talk to my child in relation to the research project.

Child's name:_____

Signature of parent/guardian:_____

Date:_____

Appendix I

Head teacher requesting access

Head Teacher
School address Date

Dear

Research: Education Provision for Children with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD): Policy to Practice in one LA

I am undertaking some research on behalf of the (LA) and (name) University (I am a PhD student) into educational provision within the Borough for children with moderate learning difficulties.

I understand from (lead name) that the research was discussed at a meeting of the (school) Partnership at the end of the summer term and that those present were in favour of the research taking place.

The research is looking at education provision from 4 to 16 years and I hope to conduct case studies in nursery, primary, secondary and special schools. I should therefore be very grateful if you might agree to me carrying out a case study within your school. This would involve the following:

- A two day observation of a child with MLD in each Key Stage.
- Interviews with yourself, the SENCO, staff responsible for inclusion, a Governor and a parent of a child with MLD.
- Focus groups involving teachers, teaching support staff of children with MLD and other service providers (e.g. psychologist, speech and language therapist as agreed with you).

If you are agreeable to this I wonder whether I could arrange a meeting with you in the next few weeks to discuss the details and to agree a start time for the research.

If you would like to discuss the research, my telephone number is (xxxx). I have an answer phone should I be away from my desk and will return your call as quickly as possible.

I look forward to hearing from you and thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely
Sue Madigan

Appendix J

Head teacher permission: case study

Research: Education Provision for Children with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD): Policy to Practice in one LA

Case Study to be undertaken in (date)

Head Teacher
School address

I hereby give permission for this school to be used for the purposes of a case study for the above research. It is understood that this case study will involve the following:

- Interviews with key personnel to include the Head Teacher, SENCO, a parent of a child with MLD and a Governor.

- Focus groups to include teachers of children with MLD, teaching support staff working with children with MLD and other service providers as agreed with the sponsor and Head Teacher. The aim will be to obtain views about provision, its practical application and issues that arise.

- Observations: One pupil at each Key Stage to be observed for a period of 2 days per child and interviewed in order to obtain a view of their lives in an educational environment. Interviews will be carried out in a manner appropriate for each child. The observation will include breaks and dinner time and may involve informally speaking to supervising staff at those times.

It is understood that the information provided is confidential; accessible only by those conducting the research and that data reported will remain anonymous, attributed by job title only. The name of the school will not be reported.

_____
Head Teacher

_____
Date

Appendix K

Head teacher permission: survey

Research: Education Provision for Children with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD): Policy to Practice in one LA

Survey to be undertaken in (date)

Name
Head Teacher
School address

I hereby give permission for the completion of the following questionnaires relating to education provision for children with MLD:

Head Teacher
SENCO
Teacher
Learning Support Assistant
School Parent
School Governor

It is understood that the information provided is confidential; accessible only by those conducting the research and that data reported will remain anonymous, attributed by job title only. The name of the school will not be reported.

_____
Head Teacher

_____
Date

Appendix L

Participant information: survey.
Sent with consent form Appendix N

EDUCATION PROVISION FOR CHILDREN WITH MODERATE LEARNING DIFFICULTIES (MLD): POLICY TO PRACTICE IN ONE LA

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this survey. Please find attached the questionnaire which consists of sections as follows:

- Background Information
- Preparation for teaching children with MLD
- Support in the classroom and during non-teaching time
- Pupil involvement (questionnaires for Teachers and SENCOs)
- School/Parent partnership
- Other factors impacting on a child's education
- Your thoughts about inclusion.

I anticipate that the questionnaire will take a maximum of 30 – 40 minutes to complete. I am very aware of the time pressures under which you operate and should be grateful for key points briefly stated which, when collated with the other schools, will identify areas for further investigation.

As there are several different titles for staff providing classroom support, the job title 'Learning Support Assistant' has been used in the questionnaire as a generic title.

Should you have any queries or wish to discuss any element of the questionnaire or research as a whole, I can be contacted on (xxxx).

Thank you very much for your time and assistance with this project.

Sue Madigan
(Researcher/PhD student)

Appendix M

Participant information: given to all participants

EDUCATION PROVISION FOR CHILDREN WITH MODERATE LEARNING DIFFICULTIES: POLICY TO PRACTICE IN ONE LA

Purpose:	The purpose of this project is to identify elements of educational provision that have been recognised as successful in the education of children with moderate learning difficulties (MLD) from age 4 to 16 years in special and mainstream schools. The findings will inform future planning decisions within the Borough.
What definition of MLD is to be used?	Schools currently use a definition of MLD for the completion of the Pupil Level Annual Schools Census (PLASC). This definition will be used for this project.

How will this be achieved?	A variety of methods will be used to obtain the information needed to identify what works and what doesn't for children with MLD.
	
	These methods will include:
	• *a survey*: schools within the Borough will be contacted and asked to participate in this survey.
	• *interviews*: staff within the LEA and from Services other than Education will be interviewed.
	• *existing educational and social data* will be examined to identify any trends and factors that may impact upon the successful implementation of provision for children with MLD.
	• *case studies*: four schools (nursery, special, primary and secondary mainstream schools) will be invited to become involved in the project. In each school the following will take place:
	  ○ *interviews*: with the Head Teacher, SENCO, a Governor and a parent of a child with MLD*;*
	  ○ *focus groups*: consisting of: teacher(s) of children with MLD, learning support assistant(s) supporting children with MLD and another Service provider involved with children with MLD in the school, for example, an educational psychologist or speech and language therapist.

Continued

How will this be achieved?	○ *observations:* of one child with MLD in each key stage over a 2 day period. This may involve informal discussions with others who may become involved in the care of these children during the day, for example, dinner supervisors. ○ *records* will be viewed where agreed for example, pupil data showing progress over a period of time.
When will this happen?	The project is already underway, but the actual collection of information as described above will commence in (date). It is anticipated that this stage will continue until (date). Initial findings will be reported to the LA in (date).
How will it affect me?	The outcomes from this project may not affect you directly, however, it will make a difference for the children with MLD who you currently support and will support in the future. These children will benefit from your input because best practice will be identified and shared and future planning decisions will be made based on the evidence you provide.

Appendix N

Participant consent form

Research: Education Provision for Children with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD): Policy to Practice in one LA

Consent

I have received and read the information provided about this research project and had any questions answered.

I am happy to take part in the research and understand that any information I provide will be confidential, to be viewed only by the researcher, the (LA lead) and (university supervisor), all of whom are conducting this research project. When the research findings are reported the data and any direct quotations will remain anonymous, being allocated to generic job titles and not individuals.

I understand that I may withdraw from the research at any point and that in this instance any data I have provided will not be used.

_____

Participant

_____

Date

Appendix O

Matrices used for the analysis of interview and survey data.

Headings in bold indicate the initial a priori categories identified from the research questions. These were further sub-divided as indicated within the tables.

In order to identify individual settings, entries in each column were coded. It was therefore possible to use the matrix to analyse data by setting or job role.

How children are taught

Node title	H/T	SENCO/IM	Teacher	TA	Parent	Pupil	LA
1:1							
Early intervention							
Groups							
Withdrawal							
(In)dependence							
Monitoring							
Targets							
Strategies							
Streaming v Mixed							
TA role							
Teacher role							

MLD

Node title	H/T	SENCO/IM	Teacher	TA	Parent	Pupil	LA
Characteristics of MLD							
Definitions of MLD							
Numbers of pupils with MLD							
Views of pupil experiences; behaviour issues							
Self-image							

LA

Node title	H/T	SENCO/IM	Teacher	TA	Parent	Pupil	LA
Service provision							
Policy							
Statements							

Multi agency working

Node title	H/T	SENCO/ IM	Teacher	TA	Parent	Pupil	LA
General							
CAF							
EP service							
SLT service							

Parent partnership

Node title	H/T	SENCO/ IM	Teacher	TA	Parent	Pupil	LA
Barriers							
Does partnership matter?							
School/parent thoughts on partnership							
School flexibility re seeing parents							
What schools do for parents							
Methods of communication							

School Management

Node title	H/T	SENCO/IM	Teacher	TA	Parent	Pupil	LA
Physical management of settings							
Planning, provision mapping							
Resources e.g. staff, equipment, money.							
H/T experience, role							
H/T interaction with children							
SENCO experience, role							
SENCO interaction with children							
TA experience, role							
Teacher experience, role							

Social

Node title	H/T	SENCO/IM	Teacher	TA	Parent	Pupil	LA
Activities							
Behaviour of others, bullying							
Friendships							

Training

Node title	H/T	SENCO/IM	Teacher	TA	Parent	Pupil	LA
CPD							
Identification of needs, evaluation, dissemination							
Networking							
SENCO training, induction, support							
TA training, support							
Teacher training, support							

Transition

Node title	H/T	SENCO/IM	Teacher	TA	Parent	Pupil	LA
16+							
Issues							
Primary to Secondary							
Nursery to Primary							
Mainstream/ special							

Where children should be taught

Node title	H/T	SENCO/IM	Teacher	TA	Parent	Pupil	LA
Outreach							
Special or mainstream							

Inclusive education

Node title	H/T	SENCO/IM	Teacher	TA	Parent	Pupil	LA
IE – in favour							
IE – against							
What is IE?							

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